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T H E
DIVINE CHARACTER
O F
C H R I S T

Considered and Vindicated.

I N
A SERIES of DIALOGUES

On that interesting and important SUBJECT.

In which the many scriptural evidences of the Deity of our Lord are fairly exhibited, and the various objections thrown out against it, particularly in some late publications, attempted to be obviated.

By JOHN BEATSON.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a REASON of the hope that is in you, with MEEKNESS and FEAR. 1 Pet. iii. 15.

I said, DAYS should speak, and MULTITUDE OF YEARS should teach wisdom. But there is a SPIRIT in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.—Therefore, —I also will shew mine opinion. Job xxxii. 7—11.

L E E D S :

Printed for the AUTHOR;

And sold by J. Rivington, in St. Paul's Church-Yard,
and Messrs. Richardson and Urquhart, under the
Royal-Exchange, London.

[Price ONE SHILLING and SIX-PENCE.]

DIVINE CHARACTER

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THE PREFACE.

THE subject of the following pages, being, according to the title prefixed to them, A Vindication of the DIVINE CHARACTER of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, is, confessedly, of great importance, and universal concern. It is not one of the circumstantials of Christianity, but is, in my opinion at least, a necessary doctrine to its very existence: It enters into the essence or nature of it; for, that GOD *was manifest in the flesh*, is certainly the *leading*, the *cardinal truth* in the Christian system.

Every well-meant attempt, therefore, to illustrate, or defend it, should at least be esteemed laudable, especially by the friends and patrons of truth. However, had not the above-mentioned doctrine been of late more than ordinarily opposed; had not

many attempted to degrade the Saviour of the world almost, if not altogether, to a level with themselves; the subsequent pages, it is more than probable, had never been written.

But, as many attempts have been made, by different persons, to explode the commonly-received doctrine of our Saviour's DEITY, the author has been induced, carefully and diligently to review his ideas upon that subject, together with the grounds or reasons of them. The result of this enquiry, after earnest prayer to God for direction, and an attentive search of the scriptures, was, a further establishment in what he had hitherto believed and maintained; namely, That the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, is in the most proper sense of the word, and without a figure, GOD.

The reasons which fully determine the author's judgement in this most interesting point, are specified in the following dialogues. They are drawn entirely from the sacred scriptures, and derive their weight and authenticity solely from the records of heaven. The Bible, that too
much

THE PREFACE.

v

much neglected book, is, in his estimation, the only test of truth; the final decider of all controversy; and the sole rule of the Christian's faith. From it alone he forms his religious sentiments, and by that infallible criterion he is desirous that all the parts of the following dialogues should be candidly and impartially tried.

Conscious of the vast importance of the subject, and sensible of the great imperfection of his ideas, and that of all other persons in the present state, with respect to the nature of God and divine things, he has paid the greatest deference to the plain declarations of scripture, and trusts that he has manifested a becoming reverence for the sacred word. All levity of spirit, all frothy wit, and every thing of a trifling nature, ought, he thinks, to be entirely banished in treating on so sacred, and sublime a topic; and therefore, according to the prefixed motto, he has endeavoured to give *a reason of the hope that is in him*, with MEEKNESS and with FEAR.

Controversy is what the author is by no means fond of, nor would it be easy

to engage him in it, except where he apprehends, some of the important truths of the gospel are opposed, and the eternal interests of mankind in question. 'It is, indeed, often carried on in a manner, not very becoming either the Christian, or the Gentleman; and very difficult it is, in the course of it, to be under such perfect self-command, as to have no ground of uneasiness, upon reflection.' If, therefore, any thing of this nature should have dropped from his pen, he hopes it will be excused, and, upon its being pointed out to him, he will thankfully acknowledge the favour, and readily expunge it.

Being desirous, however, to *renounce the hidden things of dishonesty*, and having an utter dislike to every thing which has the appearance of artifice and deceit; if any thing unfair and disingenuous has occurred in the writings which have been consulted; he hopes the authors will not take any umbrage at its being exposed to public view. Should any person take the same freedom with the following pages, and in a cool, dispassionate, and Christian-like manner, endeavour to convince him that
any

THE PREFACE. vii

any of his arguments are not properly supported, all due attention will be given to what is said; as he is persuaded, that no sincere enquirer after truth will act in so disingenuous a manner, as to take advantage of a single sentence, which perhaps may be left unguarded; as no merely human author can plead an entire exemption from errors, much less one at his first appearance.

Absolute liberty of conscience, or, in other words, the right of judging and acting for ourselves in matters of religion, is, the author firmly believes, a right essential to our nature, which we hold independently of our fellow-creatures, and for the exercise of which, so far as it relates to religion merely, we are accountable to none but the Supreme Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. And being desirous always to enjoy this liberty himself, he is equally solicitous that others should do the same; and therefore would have no person to receive any thing asserted in the following pages, further than it is supported by the evidence of scripture.

A

A want of consideration, indeed, or what is much worse, a persecuting spirit, has, he freely confesses, influenced some persons, who apparently have had a real regard for truth, to discover an inclination to inflict temporal punishment upon such, as *they* apprehended injured her character, or detracted from her charms. But such a procedure, in his opinion, is quite foreign to the genuine spirit of the gospel; and, as appears evident from matter of fact, is calculated rather to injure, than promote, the cause of Christ and the spread of his glorious Gospel.

Divine Truth, having her origin from heaven, and being perfectly uniform in her character, will doubtless bear a free, and particular examination. Every attempt, therefore, to eclipse her lustre, will be absolutely abortive, and serve rather to render it more conspicuous, and cause it to shine with brighter rays. Her enemies may, indeed, be numerous, and their attacks formidable and malevolent; but, she will never want friends to support her interests, and by just reasoning, maintain her cause against all opposers.

How

THE PREFACE. ix

How far the following pages may answer the above purpose, must be left entirely to the judgment of the reader and a Divine blessing. This the author can safely affirm, That he has written from a deep sense of the importance of the subject, and a clear and full conviction, in his own mind, of its being a divinely-attested truth. A truth which shines with great perspicuity, in that *form of sound words* contained in the holy scriptures.

Some persons, perhaps, even of those who are like-minded with the author, will be ready to say, He has left out many passages which might have been produced in proof of his subject. This may probably be matter of fact. He has however, produced those which struck his own mind with the greatest force, and which, he believes, will be sufficient to support the argument against every opposer.

Others, probably, may think, that, as he has not rested the Deity of Christ upon his Sonship, he has injured the cause, even while he has attempted to defend it. To do this, would give him the greatest
pain,

pain. But, he hopes, that so far from *injuring*, this mode of representation will serve to *remove* many difficulties out of the way, and consequently promote, and establish the doctrine which he has attempted to vindicate. Should any still be disposed to object or cavil; he can make no other reply than this; He has written the real sentiments of his own mind, and represented the subject in that point of light in which it appears to himself; and which he apprehends to be far more eligible than any other mode of representation.

Others, perhaps, may say, That the author has gone beyond his line, and that they have almost entirely lost sight of him. To this he would reply, by way of apology, If he should see a person, for whom he has a particular regard, wading beyond his depth, and in the most imminent danger of being lost; surely to venture after him, to bring him if possible safe to land, is not culpable, though the attempt should be attended with some degree of danger to himself: The application is easy.

The method he has chosen in writing the following tract, is the dialogue form.

This

This he thought would be more upon a level with the understandings of the lower class of people, and render the subject more familiar and entertaining. He has not, indeed, brought a professed enemy upon the carpet, because he thought it not so eligible, on several accounts. But, though the Dialogist be no enemy; though he believe the doctrine which is defended in the following pages; yet he states the objections in the fairest and strongest light, and generally, in the very words of those who have professedly written against it.

The objections which are noticed in the following dialogues, are taken chiefly from some modern publications; partly, because the minds of many people have been greatly perplexed by them; and partly, because they contain something a little different from what has been usually said upon the subject.

The author has not the vanity to think, that any thing he has said will produce conviction in the minds of those, who set up reason above revelation in what relates to things of a divine nature. No doubt the following pages will be read with contempt

tempt by some, and perhaps with dislike by many; notwithstanding this, if any who are wavering, be established; or, if any gain further light upon the subject, by what is now put into their hands; the author will greatly rejoice, and think the time he has spent in the writing of them, has not been altogether in vain. Should the reader have as much pleasure in perusing the following little tract, as the author has had in preparing it for the press, notwithstanding the trouble which attended it, they will both have reason to rejoice together.

That a divine blessing may attend this feeble attempt to promote the Redeemer's glory, and that it may be under the patronage and protection of heaven, is the earnest prayer of the reader's well-wisher and servant for Jesus's sake.

THE AUTHOR.

HULL, Sept. 1773.

THE CONTENTS.

D I A L. I.

THE character of the speakers : The importance of the subject : The name *Jehovah* shown to be applied to *Christ*.

D I A L. II.

The name *God* applied to *Christ* : Divine Epithets also attributed to him.

D I A L. III.

Divine Titles given to *Jesus* : As The Everlasting Father : The Lord of hosts, &c.

D I A L. IV.

Divine Perfections ascribed to *Christ* : As Eternity : Immutability.

D I A L. V.

Other Divine Perfections ascribed to *Christ* : As Omnipotence : Omniscience : Ubiquity.

D I A L. VI.

Divine Works performed by *Christ* : As Creation : Preservation : Miracles : The pardoning of Sin : The giving of Eternal Life to his people : The Conservation of them from all their spiritual enemies : And the process of the last day.

D I A L. VII.

Divine Worship given to *Christ* : By Angels and Saints.

D I A L. VIII.

The subject of Divine Worship continued.

D I A L. IX.

Various Objections answered : The Subject improved.

DIALOGUE I.

PHILANTHROPOS * was a person of the most disinterested benevolence, whose knowledge of GOD and divine objects was extensive, and who, being powerfully actuated by the love of that glorious Being, bore a constant and an unfeigned good-will to his fellow creatures. To be engaged in the christian offices of kindness and beneficence, even to the evil and unthankful, afforded him the noblest and most refined pleasure imaginable.

Having, by the gracious influences of the Spirit of God, had a clear and rational conviction of the total depravity of his nature, as well as of the innumerable transgressions of his life; having also, on this account, seen himself deservedly in a condemned state †, he had been induced to embrace, in the most cordial manner, *the glorious gospel of the blessed God ‡*. Even that gospel, in which Christ is so conspicuously exhibited, as *the END of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth* ||. Being sincerely desirous after this soul-comforting period, to know and

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do

* A lover of mankind.

† Gal. iii. 10.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 11.

|| Rom. x. 4.

do the will of God, he, like the royal prophet, daily and attentively perused *the sacred scriptures of truth**; which he justly considered as a perfect rule, both with respect to his faith and practice. And though, according to the positive commands of his Lord, he called no man MASTER, or FATHER, *upon earth*†, but subjected his conscience to the authority of Christ alone; yet he paid a proper attention even to the writings of men, and was ever willing to receive the truth, by whatever hand it was pointed out to him.

NEOPHYTUS ‡ was a young man, who bore a religious character, and who, through the tender mercy of him that fixeth the bounds of our habitation, had, like Timothy, enjoyed, even *from his childhood*, the peculiar happiness of *knowing the holy scriptures* §. By a divine blessing upon a pious education, the seed of grace was sown early in his heart, and, by a close and regular attention to the appointed duties of religion, had grown up, like a well-watered plant, to some degree of maturity. He had, also, from a consciousness of the inestimable value of a prudent, and judicious friend, contracted a particular intimacy with Philanthropos, to whom, upon all occasions, he unboomed himself with the greatest freedom.

But, how great soever was the proficiency he had made in religious knowledge, his *heart* was
not

* Dan. x. 21. † Matt. xxiii. 9, 10. ‡ A young christian.
§ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

not, as yet, sufficiently *established with grace* *. Though he was a plant which God himself had planted, and therefore should never be *plucked up* †, yet, like a tender sapling, he was liable to be sorely shaken, with the stormy blasts of erroneous doctrines, which was fully demonstrated by the event; for, falling into the company of some sceptics in religion, and who, opposed in particular, what he had esteemed the great and leading truth of the gospel, the DEITY of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; partly by the subtlety of the objections they raised against it, and partly by the gross absurdities they fixed upon it, his tender mind, being entirely unaccustomed to religious controversy, was considerably embarrassed; and the reading of some pernicious tracts, which at this time were put into his hands, greatly increased his perplexity, as they were written with a professed design, to invalidate and explode the important doctrine above mentioned.

In this conjuncture, *the enemy coming in* upon him *like a flood* §, he frequently retired into the fields for serious and devout contemplation; where, by plaintive and mournful soliloquies, he endeavoured to alleviate the pungent distress under which he laboured. One evening, while he was musing upon this subject, and, in the greatest perplexity of mind, as usual, he was

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espied

* Heb. xiii. 9.

† Matt. xv. 13.

§ Is. lix. 19.

espied by Philanthropos, who, upon a nearer approach, accosted him in the following manner.

PHIL. Well met my friend ! How happy am I to find you so unexpectedly in my rural walk. I was this day thinking, what a long time has elapsed, since I enjoyed the pleasure of the agreeable company and conversation of Neophytus !

NEO. I have, alas ! too much reason, Philanthropos, to repent, that I have not visited you as usual. For, had I been so prudent as to have opened my mind to you sooner, in a friendly manner, I might, probably, have been freed from much anxiety and distress ; which, together, have, in a great measure, deprived me of my wonted spiritual comfort.

PHIL. To hear, Neophytus, that any thing has had so much influence upon your mind, as to deprive you, in any measure, of the solid comforts of religion, gives me, I assure you, no inconsiderable degree of concern. However, you will now, I hope, ingenuously tell me the cause of your uneasiness ; and, if any thing that I can say in reply to your complaints, may have the least tendency towards relieving your distress, it will give me a real and an unspeakable pleasure.

NEO. The causes of my present distress, on account of which, I have long been in great anxiety,

anxiety, are some doubts which have occurred to me, partly by a late conversation, and partly by reading some little treatises, upon what I have hitherto deemed a leading and fundamental truth of the everlasting gospel ; I mean, the DEITY of the Lord Jesus Christ.

PHIL. I am extremely sorry that you should, in any measure, be disturbed on that account, since, what you have hitherto so justly deemed a truth, is no less than the first and capital principle in the gospel system. For, if the Lord Jesus Christ were not truly God ; if he had not really a Divine nature as well as a human one ; *our faith is vain, and we are yet in our sins**. Besides, the glorious and heart-reviving doctrines of *justification* by his obedience ; of *redemption* in his blood ; of acceptance in him, or salvation by him ; are all, upon that supposition, grossly absurd, and absolutely chimerical.

If then these things are properly considered, notwithstanding the Deity of Christ has by some been treated as a mere notional, barren sentiment ; yet it will, I think, plainly appear to be as much a fundamental principle in the christian system, as that there is *a God*. And, if Christ be truly God, which, in my apprehension, the scriptures sufficiently prove ; then, we are, undoubtedly, as much obliged to worship and adore him, as the Father ; so that the denial of this doctrine must be a capital and fatal error.

A 3

NEO..

* 1 Cor. xv. 17.

6 THE NAME JEHOVAH Dial. I.

NEO. I have, till some time ago, thought, that all professing christians, of what denomination soever, notwithstanding their differences in other respects, were perfectly agreed in their ideas of the divinity of Christ. But, from my late conversation with some persons of very opposite sentiments, and this little tract which you see in my hand, I am now clearly convinced, I was under a palpable mistake.

PHIL. Pray, who is the author of that tract Neophytus ?

NEO. The signature annexed to it is, "*A Lover of the Gospel*".

PHIL. A Lover of the Gospel, and deny the Divinity of our Lord ! It surely cannot be. He may, I will allow, love what the apostle calls *another gospel* *, but he certainly cannot love *the gospel of the GRACE OF GOD* †. No ; the gospel which he loves, if it deserve that name, is as directly opposite to the gospel of OUR SALVATION ‡, as the west is to the rising sun.

The proper Godhead of Christ, or his being essentially one with the Father, is the sole basis, on which, as on a solid rock, the noble superstructure of the Christian religion stands. Take that away, and the glorious building, like the baseless fabric of a vision, must inevitably fall to nothing,

* Gal. i. 6. † Acts xx. 24. ‡ Eph. i. 13.

Dial. I. APPLIED TO CHRIST. 7

nothing. For, if our Saviour were only a created being, how exalted soever his nature, the most capital truths of the gospel, on which our hopes of salvation are entirely founded, must, as we have already observed, be utterly, and absolutely exploded. Indeed, there is no other possible foundation on which they can be firmly built.

Besides, were not the Lord Jesus Christ truly and properly God ; to *address* him as an object of religious worship, or to *trust in* him as a deliverer from sin, would be wholly and entirely useless and vain. Nay, upon that supposition, the former would be the grossest idolatry, and the latter the very foolishness of folly. *This* the greatest absurdity, and *that* the most egregious impiety imaginable !

On the whole, then, when we consider the inseparable connexion there is between the doctrine of our Saviour's divinity, and various other important truths ; when we reflect what a train of the most interesting consequences are necessarily involved in it ; it must certainly be allowed by all, to be a capital subject ; which therefore, cannot be discussed with too much caution, care, and exactness.

NEO. The great importance of the subject, Philanthropos, appears to me in a very conspicuous point of view. The consequences which attend the denial of it, I am convinced, are truly

8 THE NAME JEHOVAH Dial. I.

ly alarming ; and, the principal tendency of this little tract, as manifestly appears from the contents of it, is, under a specious pretence of superior deference to reason *, entirely to explode that article of our faith, as unworthy of God, and unfavourable to the virtue and happiness of mankind.

I am here told, that “ The prevalence of so impious a doctrine †, can be ascribed to nothing but to that *mystery of iniquity*, which though it began to work in the times of the apostles themselves, was not then risen to so enormous a height as to attack the supremacy of the *one living and true God*, and give his *peculiar glory to another*”. And that, “ Till this great corruption of christianity be removed, it will be in vain to preach the gospel, to jews, or mahometans, or, indeed, to any people who retain the use of that reason and understanding which God has given them.” And, fully to complete the charge, it is expressly affirmed to be “ a most absurd and impious doctrine.”

Now I freely confess, Philanthropos, that I have for some time, laboured, under difficulties with

* The Author of the *APPEAL to the serious and candid professors of christianity*, very unfairly and disingenuously suggests, that his opponents “ *decry human reason, and require persons to abandon it wherever religion is concerned*”. But we absolutely deny the charge ; we think that even the insinuation is very illiberal, and by no means becoming a candid and ingenuous disputant ; much less one who professes himself to be *A LOVER of the GOSPEL*. † The Divinity of Christ.

with respect to this momentous subject, from which, I am exceedingly desirous to be freed. Not that I am under much hesitation with regard to the truth of it ; but I find myself at a loss properly to explain it, and to answer the numerous objections which I have repeatedly heard thrown out against it. To have, therefore, its evidence fairly produced, and the difficulties under which I labour, properly obviated, would give me no inconsiderable degree of pleasure ; it would also be peculiarly satisfactory to my mind. And this is what I now hope to receive, from your friendly advice and assistance.

PHIL. The glorious and interesting truth of the Divinity of our Saviour Christ, has, even from its very first publication, been strenuously opposed, by persons of various characters, and from different motives. But, after all the repeated efforts which have been, and still continue to be made, in order to invalidate and explode it ; though every scholastic art has been used, and all the numberless subtilities of criticism displayed, yet it stands, like a solid rock amid the roaring waves, undisturbed and impregnable. Yes, Neophytus, it is supported by such strength of evidence, and solidity of argument in the word of God, that, I am fully persuaded, so long as the Bible is regarded as the standard of truth, it can never decently be denied, much less will it be expunged from the Christian system.

To

10 THE NAME JEHOVAH Dial. I.

To explain to you every thing relating to this important doctrine, in such a manner as to obviate all exceptions, and remove every difficulty, would take up a considerable time, and perhaps, after all, be absolutely impossible. Nor, indeed is this necessary ;—for, where the proofs of any doctrine are clear and strong, every unprejudiced person must acknowledge, that objections against it will inevitably fall, for want of a proper basis, though every such futile objection receive not a particular answer.

I shall attempt, then, in compliance with your request, and depending upon divine assistance, to produce such arguments as I apprehend will be sufficient to establish the truth, in the judgment of every candid and ingenuous person ; —and to demonstrate the doctrine of our Saviour's Deity, that justly-esteemed basis of the Christian religion, is not, in my opinion, a very difficult task, nor doth it require any elaborate researches. And with respect to the objections which are usually brought against it, how numerous and plausible soever, they will, I doubt not, be unanswerably confuted by the convincing evidence of the word of God : they will fall Neophytus, by that penetrating *sword of the spirit**, as Dagon fell *before the ark of the Lord* †.

NEO. I shall attend with the greatest pleasure to the discussion of this most interesting subject, and,

* Eph. vi. 17.

† 1 Sam. v. 4.

and, as we have now a favourable opportunity, I beg that you will immediately enter upon it.

PHIL. What you desire of me then, Neophytus, is, To evince from scripture authority, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, is possessed of a Divine Nature. Or, in other words, that the illustrious personage who, near eighteen hundred years ago, appeared on this earth, and tabernacled among us; who also was generally known by the appellations of The Son of God, and The Christ the Saviour of the world, properly sustains a Divine Character.

NEO. Yes; that is the subject concerning which I want some further information. And the rather, since it is peremptorily affirmed by the author of the book in my hand, that "our Saviour and Deliverer was *a mere man*, as the other Jews were, and as we ourselves also are". And further, "that the apostles considered Christ, as being, with respect to his *nature*, truly and properly *a man*, consisting of the same constituent parts, and of the same rank with ourselves."

PHIL. That the only-begotten Son of God was, and is, truly and properly *man*, I readily allow; we constantly and strenuously maintain it, as a position which we steadfastly believe, and in which we continually rejoice. "Nor,
is

12 THE NAME JEHOVAH Dial. I.

is Christ's being made by the immediate hand of God, and not born in the usual course of generation, any reason for his not being considered as a man. For then, Adam must not have been a man".

But the true state of the question between us and your author is, Whether the Lord Jesus Christ be a man *merely*? With respect to some others, it is, Whether he be not a super-angelic spirit; something *more*, even than an angel, but *less* than God. Both these positions we deny; and affirm, on the contrary, That our blessed Lord is truly, and in the most proper sense of the word, GOD.

In further reasoning upon this subject, Neophytus, I shall appeal only to the most obvious sense and interpretation of the scriptures; for, that "in all theological controversies, our appeal lies to the *Bible*, which contains the writings of the inspired prophets, the apostles and evangelists, who have recorded the precepts and doctrines of Christ", I have long been fully persuaded. And "formidable as the greatest adversary of the truth may be, I make no doubt but that, by the exercise of a common understanding, and the assistance of *that sword of the spirit, which is the word of God**, he will be finally overcome".

NEO.

* Eph. vi. 17.

NEO. I am perfectly well satisfied with the test you propose, Philanthropos, since I am desirous that my faith may *stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God**.

PHIL. In the sacred scriptures, then, we have several distinctive characters of the Supreme Being, which he claims as peculiarly his own, and by which he hath manifested his glories unto us. Such, in general, are, his *names, titles, attributes, works, and honours*. Now these are, certainly, the essential characteristicks of Deity, and therefore can never be ascribed to, nor performed by, any merely created being.

If, then, we can clearly prove, that these *names, titles, &c.* are attributed to Christ, his Divine character will, I should think, be fully and indubitably established. And I hope to set these things in so conspicuous a point of view, that, to use the words of a prophet, *he may run that readeth them. †*

NEO. I am all attention, Philanthropos, to what you have to offer upon this momentous subject, and therefore I beg that you will proceed in the prosecution of it.

PHIL. The *names*, then, which, in the inspired writings, are attributed to our Saviour, are, in my apprehension, an irrefragable argument in proof of his Godhead. For, if those

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very

* 1 Cor. ii. 5.

† Hab. ii. 2.

14 THE NAME JEHOVAH Dial. I.

very names which indubitably characterize the Supreme Being, are ascribed to Christ, they must, surely, be expressive, designedly expressive, of his Divine Character.

You will, I doubt not, Neophytus, easily recollect, which are the principal names that the great Creator hath assumed to himself, and by which his essential glory is manifested unto us.

NEO. The principal names which the Supreme Being assumes as peculiarly his own, and which seem to be more especially expressive of his character, are LORD and GOD. The latter of which hath some particular honour, or additional epithet, frequently annexed to it; as the *eternal, most high, living, almighty*, and the like. But are these names applied to our Saviour?

PHIL. Yes; they are applied to him plainly and frequently, and even without the least intimation, or the most distant hint, that they are improperly used. To illustrate which, we will begin with the first of them.

The divine name LORD, or according to the original language JEHOVAH*, is the incommunicable

* יְהוָה For the information of the unlearned reader, it may not be improper to observe that, where the word Lord, in the Old Testament, is written in capitals [LORD] it is in the hebrew language JEHOVAH, or JEVE. And the greek word *Κυριος* *Kyrios*, by which it is translated in the Septuagint, and which is so frequently applied to the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament, properly corresponds with it.

communicable name of the Supreme Being. *His name ALONE is Jehovah, the most high over all the earth**. He claims it as his sole prerogative. *I am the LORD, that is my name, and my glory I will not give to another †*. It signifies He that is; or is expressive of the eternity, self-existence, and unchangeableness of the Almighty. And the words of the evangelist John, in that most glorious revelation which was made to him, are a proper and significant explanation of it. *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, who is, and who WAS, and who IS TO COME ‡*.

Since then this glorious name is absolutely incommunicable; since it cannot be ascribed to any created being; wherever we find it applied in the scriptures to any being, we have the fullest assurance, for the preceding reasons, that *that being is properly DIVINE*.

NEO. *That I think must be allowed, Philanthropos; for, since the name is incommunicable in its own nature, and seeing that the great Creator will not give his peerless glories to another, it cannot possibly comport with a created existence. But, what evidence have you of its being given to our Saviour?*

PHIL. *Were I to quote every text which might be produced upon this occasion, I should,*

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I am

* Psal. lxxxiii. 18. † Is. xlii. 8. ‡ Rev. i. 8.

16 THE NAME JEHOVAH Dial. I.

I am afraid, greatly intrude upon your patience *. However, I will mention a few, which, I think, will be fully sufficient to answer my present purpose.

You are, I doubt not, well acquainted with that sublime and magnificent description of the Deity, which is given by the prophet Isaiah, when he saw *the King, the Lord of hosts*. *He was*, this elegant writer informs us, *sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it, stood the seraphims: Each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory* §.

NEO. The passage is, indeed, remarkably sublime, and the reading of it has, I well remember, often struck me with a deep veneration.

PHIL. It is, however, notwithstanding its divine sublimity, adopted into the New Testament, and clearly applied to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The evangelist John, among other interesting truths, declares that, *Though Jesus wrought so many miracles before the people, yet they believed*

* The Greek word *Κυριος* which is translated LORD, and which generally answereth to the Hebrew name of God יהוה JEVE, or JEHOVAH, is, in the writings of the apostles, simply and absolutely ascribed to Christ a 1000 times. Leigh's Crit. Sac. § 11, vi. 1-4.

believed not on him. And the reason which he assigns for it is, *That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake,——He hath blinded their eyes, &c.*.* Now these are the very words which Isaiah spoke, in the above-cited passage, and which, therefore, plainly show, That Christ was the glorious personage whom he saw and heard.

I would observe besides, that the evangelist is not speaking of the Father, but of the Son; nor doth he quote the words of Isaiah to teach us any thing concerning the Father, but to shew the dreadful obstinacy of the Jews, by reason of which they could not believe in Christ. But, lest after all that he had said, we should still mistake his meaning, he adds, *These things said Isaiah when he saw HIS glory and spake of HIM§.* Which additional clause fully determines the sense, and, I think, demonstrably proves, that the Lord Jesus Christ is intended; for, that he saw the Father's glory and spake of the Son, appears to me quite incongruous and improbable.——So that, from this noble testimony of the beloved disciple, the truth of the assertion, that the name Jehovah is applied to Jesus, is, in my opinion, irrefragable; and consequently he must be *by nature God†.*

NEO. The truth of the assertion appears to me very clearly; for as the evangelist expressly applies the

* John xii. 37—41. § John xii. 41. † Gal. iv. 8.

18 THE NAME JEHOVAH Dial. I.

the passage to the Son of God, the glory which Isaiah saw, must certainly have been HIS. But you have, I suppose, Philanthropos, other testimonies to produce in favour of this truth, besides that which you have already mentioned?

PHIL. Yes; the same evangelical prophet declares, that, *In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory* *. And another prophet, predicting the superior excellencies of the kingdom of Christ, to that of David the illustrious type of him, says, *In HIS days, Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: And, this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS* †.

Now, I would observe, that God, considered in the character of a Father, is never, I believe, described as *our righteousness*; nor are we said to be *justified in HIM*, in any part of the apostolic writings: But the Lord Jesus Christ, in almost every page of these sacred books, is clearly represented to us in one or other of these lights. There, we read, *That he is made unto us wisdom and RIGHTEOUSNESS* §. *That we are made the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God in him* †. *That we are JUSTIFIED in the name of the Lord Jesus* ||. And that *by the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ONE the free gift came upon all men unto JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE* *.

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* Is. xlv. 25. † Jer. xxiii. 6. § 1 Cor. i. 30. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 21. || 1 Cor. vi. 11. ¶ Rom. v. 18.

These testimonies, then, are, I think, a clear and solid proof, that our Saviour was the very person, of whom the prophets, in the passages above cited, particularly spoke; and to whom they applied the divine and incommunicable name Jehovah. What are *your* thoughts of them Neophytus?

NEO. They appear to me, in that view of them, quite natural and easy; and seem beautifully to harmonize with other parts of the sacred writings. And I am extremely glad to find that, *The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy**.

PHIL. We will pass on then to consider some other testimonies of the prophetic writings, comparing them as before, with the gospel comment.

Zachariah, speaking in the name of the Lord, makes many glorious promises to the church. Among others, is the following remarkable one. *I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, and THEY SHALL LOOK UPON ME WHOM THEY HAVE PIERCED* §.

Now, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the glorious personage of whom the prophet spoke; or rather, who spoke by the prophet, is, I think, undeniably evident, from the testimony of the
above-

above-cited evangelist. He informs us that, when our Lord was expanded on the cross, after he had cried, *It is finished*, and had given up the ghost, *the soldiers came,—and one of them with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there-out blood and water.* To which declaration he adds, These things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled,——THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY HAVE PIERCED *.

The same divinely-inspired writer, speaking of Jesus Christ, *the faithful witness, and the First-begotten of the dead*, saith, *Behold ! HE cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and THEY also WHO PIERCED HIM †.* Nothing, surely, can be clearer than the application of the above-mentioned prophecy to Christ in the passages which I have now quoted. It rests entirely upon Divine testimony. And therefore we conclude, That his name is Jehovah, the self-existent, and absolutely-independent Being.

NEO. Well might our Lord say, to those who disbelieved his heavenly original, *Search the scriptures,—for they are they which testify of me §.* I could not have thought that the prophetic writings, which I have been apt to look upon as in a great measure antiquated and obsolete, had spoken so clearly of his character and mission.

PHIL.

* John xix. 30—37. † Rev. i. 4—7. § John v. 39.

PHIL. Jesus himself was perfectly well acquainted with the clearness of their testimony, and therefore he constantly appealed unto it. You will give me leave, Neophytus, to mention another passage, from those precious remains of antiquity, and then I shall entirely close this part of the argument.

NEO. Certainly, Philanthropos; and I shall attend to it with the greatest pleasure.

PHIL. The prophet Joel, predicting the glorious descent of the Spirit upon the day of Pentecost, and the awful destruction of those who should reject the gospel, says, *And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE DELIVERED**.

Let us compare this with the words of the apostle Paul. *If, says that first-rate preacher of the Gospel, thou shalt confess with thy mouth the LORD JESUS, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised HIM from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For, THE SCRIPTURE SAITH,—Who-soever shall CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD shall be saved†.* Now, that he means the Lord Jesus Christ is demonstrably clear from the following words. *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?* And Christ being the person in whom they did not believe, he therefore must be the object, upon whom
whosoever

* Joel ii. 32. † Rom. x. 9—15.

whosoever *calls*, in the sense of the apostle, shall certainly obtain complete salvation.

So that, from the various parts of the holy scriptures, in which the incommunicable name JEHOVAH is applied to our Saviour, that he is truly and properly God, the necessarily, eternally, and self-existent Being, is, I think, an undeniable consequence.

NEO. The consequence, indeed, seems just and natural, and forces itself, as it were, upon the mind. But there is an objection, which I have heard brought against it, and beg leave to mention, which is this. "If we consider some instances of names imposed by the divine direction in the scriptures, we shall find that they do not *always* express any thing characteristic of the person on whom they are imposed; but, that they were intended as a memorial of some divine promise or assurance, respecting things of a public and general concern". And therefore they add, "Very little stress is to be laid on the arguments brought to prove the Divinity of Christ, from the *names* which are given to him".

PHIL. But, because names imposed by divine direction are not *always* characteristic of the person on whom they are imposed, are we necessarily led to conclude that *therefore* they are *never* so? Surely not. The contrary, however, is undeniably clear, from almost innumerable instances in the scriptures. Was not our Lord himself

himself *called* JESUS, by divine direction, to indicate his character as a *Saviour*, or to show, that *he should save his people from their sins* * ?

So that, to know whether the names which are imposed by divine direction in scripture, be designed to characterize the person or not, we must attend both to the preceding and following context, where they are used, and determine our judgement entirely by that. However, the name Jehovah is doubtless peculiar to the Supreme Being, *who was, and is, and is to come*; ‘for though it is sometimes spoken of another, as of the church †, yet not singly and properly, but with relation to HIM’ §.

On the whole, then, the argument for the Divinity of our Lord, arising from the incommunicable name Jehovah being given to him, so far from having only “very little stress laid upon it”, will, certainly, bear the greatest weight: We might venture indeed to rest the whole superstructure of Christ’s Godhead upon this basis, without having the least apprehension of its failure. For I will not scruple to affirm that, if the name Jehovah, as applied to Jesus, in the passages above quoted, be not expressive of a Divine Character, it will be absolutely in vain to attempt to prove any thing from the scripture, since worse than Egyptian darkness would rest upon the whole.

But

* Matt. i. 21.

† Ezek. xlviii. 35.

§ See Gill’s

body of Divin. vol. I, page 67.

24 THE NAME JEHOVAH Dial. I.

But what has been observed will, I hope, Neophytus, appear convincing to you ; and, in some measure at least, give relief to your mind from any disagreeable impressions which may have been made upon it.

NEO. Yes, Philanthropos, it appears with a considerable degree of evidence ; and will, I trust, answer a most valuable purpose ; for, I cannot think, but that if “ the apostles considered Christ as being, with respect to his nature, *a man only*”, they would have entirely refrained from speaking of the prophecies in the above-mentioned manner. But as they have, without the least scruple, and in so plain a manner, applied the same things to our Saviour, which the prophets affirmed of the Divine Being, it is certainly a nervous argument in proof of his Godhead. The gloomy clouds which for some time have overspread my mind, begin to disperse, and the cheering beams of gospel truth dart in upon it.

PHIL. May they *shine more and more unto the perfect day* ! May that glorious Being who once commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine into your heart, and give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ* !

NEO. So be it ! And I sincerely thank you, my dear friend, for the tender concern which
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* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

you manifest for my spiritual welfare. You will now, I hope, proceed to the other appellation, which is so frequently given to the Supreme Being, and show me how *that* is applied to our Lord.

PHIL. I would with the greatest pleasure comply with your request, Neophytus, were it not that the evening is pretty far advanced. My family, therefore, will expect me at home, to offer up our tribute of prayer and praise. But to morrow evening, if God permit, I will meet you here again, and, according to the best of my ability, will attempt to give you some further satisfaction relative to this important, and interesting subject. At present I must bid you adieu.

DIALOGUE II.

THE ensuing evening, both our friends were punctual to their mutual agreement. Each repaired, at the time appointed, to the place of meeting; and, after the customary salutations, Philanthropos resumed the conversation in the following manner.

PHIL. I hope, Neophytus, you have maturely considered the argument insisted upon in our last conference, and have carefully tried it by the word of God; for, *that*, you will remember, is the only test of truth, and the decisive balance in which all our religious sentiments must be carefully weighed. So that, if you would avoid all imposition in religious matters, and are desirous *that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God**, you must, according to the direction of the prophet, *advert to the law, and to the testimony†*; or, like the noble Bereans, *search the scriptures daily whether these things be so§*.

NEO. Our yesterday evening's conversation, Philanthropos, has, by the blessing of God,
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* 1 Cor. ii. 5.

† Is. viii. 20.

§ Acts xvii. 11.

been made peculiarly refreshing to my mind. I have, almost ever since, reflected upon it with no inconsiderable degree of pleasure. The very thought, that Jesus is JEHOVAH, affords me the most inexpressible satisfaction. How safely, I have said to myself, may I trust my all in his hands, and venture my everlasting concerns on so stable a foundation !

PHIL. Ay, it is indeed a solid rock. A basis, upon which whosoever builds, shall never be confounded. It is, God himself being judge, *a tried stone, and a sure foundation**.

NEO. I now long to hear your remarks upon the other appellation of the Supreme Being, which you say is frequently and properly applied to Christ.

PHIL. The divine name GOD, which is the first made use of in the sacred scriptures, to point out to us the great Creator of all things, and which is certainly expressive of a plurality in the Godhead, is, indeed, in the most absolute sense, often ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ. And this, I should think, must be allowed a strong proof of his proper Deity. For, how the scriptures could be vindicated, from having a most pernicious tendency, upon any other supposition, is, to me at least, extremely difficult to perceive. Nay, were not the name

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* Is. xxviii. 16.

as applied to our Lord, to be considered in this point of view, namely, as being expressive of his Godhead, the vindication of the sacred writings, I will venture to affirm, is absolutely impossible.

NEO. Please to recite a few of the passages where this name is given to Christ?

PHIL. *In the beginning was the Word,——and the Word was GOD* *. Again : *A virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name EMMANUEL, which, being interpreted, is, GOD WITH US* †. *Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever. Once more : Great is the mystery of godliness, GOD was manifest in the flesh* ‡.

It is scarcely possible for any expressions to be more explicit and obvious than these. They are full to the point, and intelligible to the meanest capacity. If, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ were not properly God, these texts, and almost innumerable others, would, like the Delphian oracle, be exceedingly ambiguous ; and, from their most obvious meaning, have a direct tendency to mislead the generality of readers.

NEO. But some persons affirm that, “ The mere term *God* is sometimes used in a lower and inferior sense in the scriptures, denoting *dominion* only ; as when the Divine Being himself says, that *he will make Moses a god to Pharaoh* § ; but, surely,

* John i. 1. † Matt. i. 23. ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 16. Heb. i. 8.

§ Exod. vii. 1.

surely, there can," they say, "be no danger of our mistaking such phrases as these; or, if that were possible, our Lord has sufficiently guarded against any misconstruction of them when applied to himself, by the explanation he has given of them; informing us, that, if, in the language of scripture, *they are called gods to whom the word of God came**, (though, in fact, they were no other than mere men) he could not be guilty of blasphemy in calling himself only *the Son of God*.

"Now, if Christ had been conscious to himself that he was the *true and very God*, and that it was of the utmost consequence to mankind that they should regard him in that light, this was", they further affirm, "a proper time for him to have declared himself, and not to have put his hearers off with such an apology as this."

PHIL. That the appellation *God* is sometimes, though very seldom, used in the scriptures in a lower and inferior sense, is very true; as in the passage which you have quoted and some few others; nor is there any danger of mistaking the proper meaning of it. For, whenever it is applied in this sense, it is always guarded with such particular restrictions and limitations, or the words are spoken in such a manner, that their connexion evidently shows, that it is to be understood in a figurative or im-

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* John x. 35.

proper sense. To instance ; The words which you have quoted, *I will make thee a god to Pharoah*, plainly demonstrate, in how very improper a manner the name is used ; nor will the most illiterate reader be in the least danger of misunderstanding them, or of conceiving of the name as though it were used in the highest sense. No ; every one will, upon reading the sentence, immediately perceive, That this name is applied to Moses, because he represented God's authority in the commanding, and his power in the punishing of Pharoah ; and not because he was truly and properly GOD.

But, when no such limitation is perceivable ; when the name is applied without any, the least restriction, as in the above-mentioned passages concerning Christ ; we are then, undoubtedly, to understand it without a figure, and as being expressive of *divine* perfections. And this, I apprehend, is the precise idea which the inspired writers designed to convey by it, when they applied it to their Master ; nor can any proof be produced that our Lord has guarded us at all against such a construction of the name, when applied to himself. The instance which you have mentioned, is not to the point ; for, if you carefully read over the passage, you will find, that our Lord did not, in that conversation with the Jews, nor indeed in any other, deny himself to be properly GOD, or equal with the Father, but, on the contrary, appealed to the

the works which he wrought, as a proof of it, and that the Father was really *in him*, and he *in the Father* *. But, the thing which Jesus denied, was, the justness of their consequence, in charging him with *making himself* GOD §, when he called himself the Son of GOD, or said That God was his Father. And he shows the falsehood of such an inference, by evincing, that the phrase *Son of God*, as applied by himself, necessarily rose no higher than to signify one who bore a peculiar relation to GOD, and who was commissioned by him in a far superior manner to any of the prophets or magistrates *to whom the word of God came* †.

If, therefore, *they* were called gods, or *the children of the most high* ||, on that account, much more might HE ; since he had a far higher commission than ever *they* enjoyed. So that, though he guarded against the misconstruction of the phrase Son of God, yet there is no such guard put upon those passages, where he is called emphatically GOD ; and therefore they remain as

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* John x. 33. § Ver. 33. † Ver. 35. " Our Lord knew that he himself was the divine Logos or Word of God, and it is likely that he used these words, with this view and meaning, viz. Surely if those are called gods, to whom the Divine Word made a visit from the Father, HE HIMSELF who came from the FATHER may well be called the Son of GOD without blasphemy. But he did not think fit to express himself so plainly to the Jews at that time, though he has left it upon record for our instruction". Watts's works, vol. 6, page 669. || Psal. lxxxii. 6,

a demonstrative proof that he was, and is, *really* and *properly* so.

NEO. What you have observed, Philanthropos, I perceive, entirely destroys the force of the argument, drawn from the above-mentioned passage, in order to prove that our Lord has sufficiently guarded those texts in which he is called GOD, from being understood in a literal sense, and so far it is satisfactory enough. But, what reply can you give to the latter part of the assertion, namely, That “had he been conscious to himself that he was the *true* and very GOD,—this was certainly a proper time for him to have declared himself.”

PHIL. *The times and the seasons*, in which every thing ought to be done, GOD *hath put in his own power* * ; nor doth it become us short-sighted mortals, immersed as it were in midnight darkness, to dictate to him in this, or in any other particular. Christ was, certainly, conscious to himself that he was the true Messiah ; and, that mankind, during his abode among them, should have regarded him as such, was, undoubtedly, of the utmost consequence to them ; nothing is more clear however, from many express declarations of his §, than that he did not choose that even *this* should be published in clear and evident language during his personal

* Acts i. 7. § See Matt. xvi. 20. Mark viii. 29, 30.
John x. 24.

sonal residence on earth. He, indeed, in effect, acknowledged the thing, but declined that particular title, except in some cases, where he knew no inconvenience would attend it* ; and, after all, the discoveries which were made of his true character, before his resurrection from the dead, when compared with the subsequent effects of that most glorious event, were exceedingly obscure.

Hence it is, that by this he is said to have been DECLARED *to be the Son of God with POWER, according to the Spirit of holiness* † ; and, by the same amazing work, ASSURANCE *was given to all men*, that he was the anointed Saviour, as well as the sovereign Judge §. And, after this most memorable period, the apostles, having their understandings further enlightened, preached boldly that he was the CHRIST, the promised MESSIAH, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write ; and thence they proceeded to assert his proper Godhead.

If, then, the Lord Jesus Christ, during his personal residence on earth, chose, for some reasons, that the doctrine of his being the true *Messiah* should not be openly divulged ; that he did not plainly, and in express terms, assert his “ *being TRUE and VERY GOD*” on all occasions, is not at all surprising ; such a cautious proceeding seems indeed at that time, to have been

* John iv. 26. and ix 37. and xi. 25.

† Rom. i. 4.

§ Acts xvii. 31.

been absolutely necessary: So that the reply which our Lord gave to the Jews, by denying the justness of their consequence, in charging him with assuming an equality with the Father, because he called himself the Son of God, is no real objection against his proper Deity; nor can any one, I think, affirm the contrary, without reflecting at the same time upon the wisdom of GOD.

NEO. I am entirely satisfied with respect to this point, Philanthropos, and clearly perceive that there was a perfect harmony, and consistency in every part of the character of our LORD.

PHIL. Were the Lord Jesus Christ, then, only called GOD, as in the texts above cited, without any particular restriction; were there no distinguishing epithets annexed unto it, it might, with great propriety, be insisted upon, as a convincing proof of his Divine Nature. For, I appeal to you, Neophytus, and to every ingenuous person, who makes the scriptures the rule of his faith, whether to understand the above mentioned passages in a literal rather than a figurative sense, be not more easy and natural? If we consider them in the latter point of view, and only as expressive of some *temporary dominion*, how flat and insignificant they appear! Whereas; when they are considered as indicating a Divine Character, they are no less calculated

lated to exalt the glorious personage of whom they are spoken, than they perfectly harmonize and agree with the other parts of the sacred writings.

NEO. This sense of them appears, indeed, the most obvious, and, I believe, is the construction which is generally put upon them. But you do not entirely found the argument upon this I perceive, Philanthropos ?

PHIL. No, not wholly ; though I think it might be done safely, and without the least fear of its being over-turned : For, notwithstanding we allow, that the name *god* is sometimes used in an inferior sense, and applied to created beings ; yet, for any *therefore* to conclude, That the same appellation when applied to OUR LORD, can mean no more than such a being, is a very unjust and fallacious deduction. We must therefore still insist, that, as the Lord Jesus Christ is called God, without any notice being given to us of its impropriety, or figurative sense, either the inspired writers mean to announce his true Godhead, or they certainly have expressed themselves in the most incautious and dangerous manner.

The evidence of this important doctrine however, doth not depend upon a *few* texts of scripture only, though a few which are plain and express, either upon this or any other religious subject, are entirely sufficient for the conviction
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of all, who regard the bible as a revelation from God: But, in the present case, we have *line upon line*, and, precept upon precept *. For all the glorious, and divine epithets, which are connected with the name GOD, as ascribed to the SUPREME BEING in the oracles of truth, and which are certainly distinctive of his Divine Nature, are, notwithstanding, by unerring pens, peremptorily affirmed of the Lord Jesus Christ.

NEO. If there be scriptural evidence for this, the argument will, I should think, be exceedingly forcible; if not absolutely demonstrative. For, that those very writings, the principal design of which is to reveal the true character of God to us, should, by applying the distinguishing lineaments in that character to any created being, make no specific difference, between the uncreated nature, and created existence, is entirely incredible. I shall be glad, therefore, to hear a few of these epithets produced.

PHIL. In the sacred canon, which, as you have justly observed, is the brightest mirror of the Deity, the Lord Jesus Christ is called the *true*, the *great*, the *most high*, the *only wise*, and the *blessed* GOD, each of which epithets deserves a particular attention. To begin then with the first of them, namely, the epithet TRUE.

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* If. xxviii. 10.

The beloved disciple, in his admirable epistle, in which he delineates the person of Christ and the character of those who have believed in him, bears a noble testimony to the Deity of his much-loved Master. *We know*, says he, *that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is TRUE; and we are in him that is TRUE, even in his SON JESUS CHRIST. This, (or He*), is THE TRUE GOD, and eternal life†.*

That the sacred writer hath but one object in view through the whole of the passage, is, I think, very obvious and clear. That the SON of GOD is that object cannot, surely, be justly doubted; and, therefore, the divine characteristic TRUE, as opposed to whatever is false and pretended, is, unquestionably, applied to HIM. Now, that the inspired apostle should close his epistle with a solemn charge against idolatry, and, in the preceding sentence, express himself in such a manner, as to lead his readers by taking his words in the most obvious sense, to consider Christ as the *true* God, if he were not really so, is not at all probable. Nay, I will venture to add, it is absolutely impossible; being entirely inconsistent with the goodness of God to his creatures.

And, indeed, after the most deliberate and impartial consideration of the text, it appears to me so strong a proof of the Divine Nature of

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our Saviour, that, to find any tolerable evasion of it, requires a far greater degree of refinement in criticism, than the generality even of *disputants* are capable of attaining. What then must the illiterate reader do? He will, if Christ be not God, and he take the words in their most natural and obvious meaning, inevitably fall into palpable errors, and have very absurd ideas of that important and interesting subject. He will necessarily be led to conceive of a creature, in the character of the *Creator*, and become guilty of “exalting a man,” into the nature of “a God.”

NEO. The text is, indeed, plain and obvious; and, I think, exceedingly pertinent to the point in hand.

PHIL. Another, no less forcible than the preceding one, I shall produce from the prophet Isaiah. *To us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and his name shall be called—*THE MIGHTY GOD*. Now this phrase is certainly expressive of the character of him, *who ONLY doeth wondrous things*†; and, therefore, by being thus applied to the Son of God, it must, I should think, irrefragably prove his *eternal power and Godhead*§.

NEO. Vigilius, however, asserts, that the words are “a prediction of that authority and dominion

* *Is.* ix. 6, † *Psal.* lxxii. 18, § *Rom.* i. 18.

dominion over all things, for his Church, to which Jesus was exalted after his ascension, and which he now possesseth at the right hand of God. But least," he adds, "by the magnificence of these titles, men should be led to imagine, that the Son held these prerogatives essentially, independent, and underived, the prophecy is sufficiently guarded, not only by representing this *Son* as *given* (i. e. by God) but also by concluding with these words, *The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this*; plainly shewing from whom the Son derives all these prerogatives."

PHIL. The explication is, I think, forced and unnatural, and by no means agreeable to the intention of the prophet; for the primary, if not the only design of the text, as evidently appears from its connexion, is, by applying those glorious characters to Christ, to make a full discovery of the glories of his person, or to show us what he is in himself independent of any other. And, therefore, we must still insist, that the inspired writer, by calling Jesus the *mighty God*, meant to declare that he was so by nature; and not merely, as Vigilus affirms, to point out the honour to which he should be exalted.

Nor, does the clause which Vigilus urges as a proof of the justness of his comment, give the least colour to such a position; it doth not,

in my opinion, refer at all to the conferring of the titles, or the granting of the prerogatives, but to the production of the Child, and the gift of the Son. No, Neophytus, the titles of that glorious personage of whom the text speaks, are absolutely underivative, his prerogatives perfectly independent, and his honours essential to himself.

He was in the beginning with God, and *was* God; and, had he never assumed the human nature, or been made in the habit of men, yet, being God by nature, he had an indubitable claim to all the prerogatives of Deity. But, on the supposition that he was only *a man*, to give him those distinguishing appellations of Godhead, would be a most amazing, egregious, and unaccountable folly!

Upon the whole, then, our Saviour being given as a Son, though that unspeakable gift be ascribed to God, even the Father, is no proof that *that* is the basis of his personal honours, nor any sufficient guard against the ascription of Deity to him.

NEO. A late celebrated *illustrator*, however, thinks, that the words may be rendered “*the mighty God is my Father for ever.*”

PHIL. But how exceeding harsh and unnatural is the construction of the words according to such a translation of them! *His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellour, THE MIGHTY GOD*

IS MY FATHER FOR EVER, *the Prince of peace.* The very reading of the passage, by that translation, is, I should think, a sufficient proof of its great impropriety, and of the extreme violence which is done to the text.

NEO. According to the proposed amendment, the passage indeed, appears to me to be considerably distorted, and not to comport with what is the apparent intention of the prophet.

PHIL. If, however, this text should not, by you or others, be thought a sufficient proof of the above-mentioned proposition, I shall subjoin, as a further confirmation of it, the words of an apostle.

Paul, ever solicitous to promote the eternal welfare of mankind, has, in order to attain so important an end, put us in mind of *the glorious appearance of the GREAT God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ**. In which words, the latter clause is, I apprehend, explanative of the former; and the true meaning therefore is, The great God, even our Saviour, or, who is our Saviour, Jesus Christ. For, that they do not refer to the Father, must, I should think, appear evident to every unbiaſſed person who reads the passage with attention; since the *great God* is the glorious personage whose *appearance* is expected, and *that* is applicable to none but the

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* Tit. ii. 13,

Lord Jesus Christ. The Father is never, in any part of the sacred writings, said *to appear*, but, on the contrary, is expressly declared to be *invisible* *.

The Son of God, then, is the adorable person whose appearance believers expect, and who will, ere long, come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Yes, Neophytus, he will, in a very little while, *descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God* §; and then, all who were *incensed against him shall be ashamed* †, and everlasting confusion shall cover them. They will then obtain a clear, but an awful, conviction, of the divine glories of our blessed Lord.

NEO. In the mouths of two such infallible witnesses, the truth of your proposition, concerning the Divine Nature of Christ, seems, indeed, to be confirmed in the strongest manner. And should it be found a truth, how awful will the consequences be in that tremendous day, to every opposer of it! I tremble at the thought!

PHIL. Awful, indeed, Neophytus! Tongue cannot express, nor heart conceive, the dreadful consternation which will immediately seize them at so unexpected, and magnificent an appearance! Oh! that he, who alone *can teach*

* 1 Tim. vi. 16. § 1 Thes. iv. 16. † II. xlv. 24.

teach to profit *, would now give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth † ! But to proceed.

The Lord Jesus Christ is called the *most high*, or, which is an equivalent expression, *over all*. The apostle of the Gentiles, enumerating the privileges of his country-men the Jews, among other particulars, adds, *Of them*, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, *who is OVER ALL, God blessed for ever ‡*. Now this expression, being so directly in point, is, I think, a decisive proof that Jesus is possessed of that distinguishing characteristic of the Supreme Being.

NEO. The above-mentioned illustrator, however, thinks very differently from you in this ; and affirms, that the words “ may with equal propriety and truth be rendered, *God, who is over all, be blessed for ever* ; the former sentence ending with the word came.” And he further adds, that “ It affords an argument favourable to my construction of these words, that it is usual with the apostle Paul to break out into a doxology, or form of thanksgiving to God, after mentioning any remarkable instance of his goodness.”

PHIL. The persons who take such liberties with the holy scriptures, may make them speak what language they please ; they may even metamorphise

* Isa. xlviii. 17. † 2 Tim. ii. 25. ‡ Rom. ix. 5.

tamorphise any expression into a different meaning *. But, would persons make a proper use of their senses, when they read the word of God, and not receive the explications which are given of it, as they do their vain conversation, that is to say, *by tradition from their fathers* †, they would immediately detect the weakness and futility of such evasions. Let us then try it by this standard. You have a bible in your pocket, Neophytus, “turn to the passage, and read what goes before and after it.” And “I have no doubt but you will find sufficient reason to reject” so novel an illustration.

NEO. The whole paragraph reads thus : *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not ; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself was accursed from Christ, for my brethren my kinsmen according to the flesh : Who are Israelites ; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises ; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen †.*

PHIL.

* ‘I cannot find any authority for rendering θεος εὐλογητός εἰς τὰς αἰώνας. God be blessed for ever. I must, therefore, render, and paraphrase, and improve this memorable text, as a proof of Christ’s proper Deity, which I think, the opposers of that doctrine have never yet been, nor ever will be able to answer.’ Doddridge’s fam. expos. note in loc. † 1 Pet. i. 18. † Rom. ix. 1–6.

PHIL. The apostle, you see, Neophytus, in the preceding context, expresseth, in the strongest terms, the pungent sorrow of his mind, on account of his brethren the Jews; who, for their unreasonable infidelity and perverseness, were about to be rejected from their numerous and valuable privileges. These blessings of divine goodness he minutely recounts, and particularly that capital one of the production of the Messiah from their nation; which he justly considers as the most invaluable mercy of all the rest. In order, therefore, to enhance this, and, if possible, to give them the same striking views of it which he himself had, he lets them know that, this glorious personage, who, as concerning the flesh, or human nature, had his derivation from them, was, notwithstanding, in respect to his Divine Nature, *over all, God blessed for ever.*

NEO. According to this view of the words, the *antithesis* * between the human and Divine natures is preserved, and the phrase *as concerning the flesh* has a proper meaning; whereas, if the sacred writer had not designed to represent our Lord as a Divine Person, that sentence, I perceive, would be highly improper, if not entirely devoid of meaning.

PHIL. Your remark is perfectly right, Neophytus. For to speak of the derivation of Christ

* Opposition of words or sentiments.

Christ from the Jews, *as concerning the flesh*, if he had no superior nature, would certainly be a gross impropriety; and therefore, would never have been done by an inspired writer. But, if in the last clause the apostle asserts the Godhead of his Master, which we apprehend is sufficiently clear, then the whole is perfectly easy and intelligible.

Besides, to convert the words into "a doxology, or form of thanksgiving to God," will by no means agree, either with the apostle's usual practice, or with the present situation of his mind: Not with *his usual practice*, for, the doxologies which we have recorded in the New Testament, are generally, if not always, for spiritual blessings actually conferred*; and not for any thing which is separable from salvation; and all the privileges enumerated in the present case, might, as the event awfully confirmed, be enjoyed, and yet everlasting destruction to the persons who partook of them, be the unhappy consequence. So that this does not comport with the practice of the apostle at other times.

Nor, permit me to add, does it at all agree with *the present situation of his mind*. He was exceedingly distressed, and in *great heaviness of heart*, by the consideration of the dreadful obstinacy and perverseness of his countrymen, and the view which he had of their final rejection. So that, to suppose the apostle would, when he

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* See Eph. iii. 21. 2 Cor. ix. 15. Eph. i. 3. Phil. iv. 20.

was thus over-whelmed in sorrow, break out into thanksgiving to God, is not, in my opinion, at all probable; nor does it in the least suit with that pressure of mind under which he then actually laboured.

Upon the whole; according to the above cited *illustration*, the passage is evidently distorted, and its natural and obvious meaning totally perverted. But, according to our view of it, the most perfect harmony appears throughout the whole, as there delineated by the Apostle, and the character of the blessed Redeemer is entirely full and complete. What I think deserves further observation, is, That every part of this title, if our representation of it be admitted, is directly calculated to refute those gross and carnal conceptions which the Jews in general entertained of Christ. They thought, with your illustrator, that he was *merely a man*, but the apostle tells them that he is GOD. They apprehended that he was inferior to the ancient *fathers*, but Paul affirms that he is OVER ALL. In a word, they accounted him to be *accursed*, but the inspired writer asserts that he is BLESSED FOR EVERMORE.

NEO. I thank you, Philanthropos, for this elucidation of the text. It now appears to me in a very conspicuous point of light, and, I think, strongly marks the Divine Character of our blessed Lord.

PHIL.

PHIL. I pass on, then, to observe, that the divine epithet *only wise* is likewise connected with the name God when applied to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle Jude, in the close of his short but alarming epistle, has these remarkable and heart-reviving words. *Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the ONLY WISE God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen*.*

Now that this passage has a particular reference to the Son, and not to the Father, is, I think, sufficiently clear, from the circumstance of *presenting believers perfect before the presence of his glory*. For this is the office of our Lord only. It is the glorious effect of his meritorious death. *He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might present it TO HIMSELF a glorious church, not having SPOT, or WRINKLE, or any such thing †.*

NEO. The latter text which you have quoted is, indeed, a striking illustration of the former, and evidently shews that the Lord Jesus Christ is the person intended.

PHIL. Yes, Neophytus, that he is the glorious personage who is characterized in the above texts, will, I am persuaded, be sufficiently evident,

* Jude xxiv. 25. † Eph. v. 25.

dent, to all who search the scriptures with un-biassed minds. As to the epithet *blessed*, we have already observed, that he who is *over all*, is likewise BLESSED FOR EVERMORE. So that nothing more seems necessary to add upon this part of the subject.

To sum up the argument then; nothing is more plain and obvious, from the very face of the scriptures, than that the Lord Jesus Christ is often called GOD in the most absolute sense, and without the least hint of the name being used in an improper manner, nay, even when a figurative interpretation of it would be manifestly absurd. And further, that the greatest part, if not all the glorious epithets, which are distinctive of the Supreme Being from every created one, are, likewise, attributed to him. So far then, every thing is clear.

Now, I would ask, Whether, if Christ were not properly God, it be not highly improbable, that such a mode of expression, so absolutely declarative of Deity, would ever have been used by the inspired writers? or, whether it could possibly comport with their characters as *inspired*, or even as *honest* men? Upon any other scheme than that of Christ's proper Godhead, the New Testament, you must give me leave to say, though confessedly the invariable rule both of our faith and practice, is, of all other books that I ever saw, the most unintelligible and inconsistent!

NEO. The question you ask, must, I think, be answered in the affirmative. For, surely, if those expressions were not to be understood in the most proper sense, we should have some plain and proper intimation of the contrary: But as nothing of this nature can be produced, the argument appears in so convincing a light, that it must give a sensible satisfaction to every candid enquirer.

PHIL. I never doubted, Neophytus, but that, if there was any force in what I said, you would perceive it as soon, and be as ready to yield your assent to it, as any one. And to hear that what has been already offered upon this subject, has given you such satisfaction of mind, is peculiarly pleasing to me, and will induce me to proceed in the prosecution with greater alacrity and delight.

NEO. I would always keep my mind open for the reception of truth, wherever it appears; and yield my assent in proportion to the degree and strength of evidence which is produced in favour of it. For this I am told, by a masterly writer, 'is one of the greatest principles of wisdom that man can arrive at in this world, and the best human security against dangerous mistakes in speculation or practice.'

As, therefore, the scripture asserts, in so plain and peremptory a manner, that Christ is God; and as all the distinguishing characters of Deity are,

are, likewise ascribed to him ; I am, certainly, under the greatest obligation to believe it ; for, were I, notwithstanding this clearness of evidence, to disbelieve it, I should, undoubtedly act a very irrational part.

PHIL. How glad am I, Neophytus, to hear you express yourself in this manner ! May you still continue *to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ**. Grow, like the deep-rooted cedar, the branching palm, and the spiry fir ; till you come, *in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ † !*

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* 2 Pet. iii. 18. † Eph. iv. 13.

DIALOGUE III.

PHIL. **H**AVING already shown that the *distinctive names*, of the supreme Being are frequently applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, we will now, if you please, consider some of the *illustrious titles* which are given to him, and which, I think, with resistless evidence, evince his proper Deity.

NEO. To hear those enumerated, and their import pointed out, will, I doubt not, afford me a peculiar satisfaction; I beg, therefore, that you will immediately proceed to the consideration of them.

PHIL. The titles, then, which are conferred upon our Saviour, and which are recorded in the sacred scriptures, are no less numerous than illustrious. A constellation of them is exhibited, within the compass of a single verse, by the evangelical prophet. WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE.*

Now,

* Is. ix. 6.

Now, the magnificence of these appellations of honour is so exceeding great, that they can never, I think, be applied to any created nature, how exalted and dignified soever that nature may be. For, were they applied to the highest seraph in all the heavenly choir, the greatest impropriety would, certainly, appear in the conferring of them; *impropriety* did I say? it would rather be the highest pitch of blasphemy, and a daring insult upon the Majesty of heaven!

Can any created being, whose existence is but as it were of yesterday, be, without a gross perversion of language, called the *Father of eternity**? Can *such* a being, with the least degree of propriety, be called the *Prince of peace*? Surely not!

NEO. The illustrator before mentioned, observes that, "These titles may not express what *Christ* is, but what GOD will manifest himself *to be in him, and by him*; so that, in the dispensation of the gospel, GOD, the wise and benevolent author of it, will appear to be a *wonderful counsellor, the everlasting father, and the prince of peace.*"

PHIL. But, Why may not these titles express what *Christ* is?

NEO. Because "if we consider other instances of names imposed by the divine direction

* If, ix, 6. Heb. See Margin.

tion in the scriptures, we shall find that they do not always express any thing characteristic of the person on whom they are imposed; but, that they were intended to be a memorial of some divine promise, or assurance, respecting things of a public and general concern."

PHIL. Very true. But what is the conclusion to be drawn from it? Because they do not *always* express any thing characteristic of the person on whom they are imposed, are we therefore to conclude that they *never* do so? Is such a consequence fairly deducible from these premises? If it be not, and surely none will say that it is; then, the reason which you have assigned, is to no purpose, but must inevitably fall to the ground.

Besides, if you carefully examine the preceding and subsequent context, you will find that the sacred writer is, professedly, delineating the character of the long expected Messiah. *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government of the whole universe shall be upon his shoulder.* And then, in order to demonstrate his peculiar qualifications for so important and extensive a reign, he mentions the honourable and glorious titles which we are now considering. So that, to express what *Christ is*, in himself, and not merely "what God will manifest himself to be in him, and by him," is certainly the design of the prophet in conferring these titles;

titles ; and, if they are expressive of the character of Deity, which cannot surely be doubted, they evidently prove that our Lord is possessed of that glorious character.

NEO. But “ if this name be supposed to characterize Christ himself, it will,” says the *illustrator*,” by no means favour the common doctrine of the trinity ; because it will make him to be the father, or the first person, and not the *Son*, or the second person.”

PHIL. Whether, on that supposition, the common doctrine of the trinity be favoured or not, the Deity of Christ will, certainly, be clearly proved. Nor is the title *Everlasting Father* in the least contradictory to this ; since, I apprehend, it is chiefly, if not wholly, designed to express, the paternal affection of Christ to his church, which will unquestionably be continued through the endless ages of eternity.

NEO. I am entirely satisfied as to the proper application of these titles, Philanthropos, and think them no less consolatory than illustrious ; please therefore to proceed in the consideration of some others which may be given to Christ.

PHIL. THE LORD OF HOSTS, then, is another of those superb titles, which are attributed to our blessed Saviour in the sacred writings. The prophet last-quoted, exhorting the Jews, to refrain from a slavish fear of man, as a mo-

tive to enforce his argument, adds, *Sanctify the LORD OF HOSTS himself, and let HIM be your fear, and let HIM be your dread. And HE shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel,—and many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken* *.

Now, by comparing this declaration of the prophet, with what is recorded of Christ in the New Testament, that he is the glorious personage spoken of, will, I think, be exceedingly obvious. For when the holy child Jesus, was, according to the Mosaic ritual, brought into the temple, to be presented to the Lord; good old Simeon, being influenced by the Holy Ghost, declared, that *HE was set for the FALL and rising again of many in Israel* †. And the apostle Peter, being actuated by the same unerring spirit, affirms, that, though to those *who believe, Christ is precious*, yet to others, he is *A STONE OF STUMBLING, and A ROCK OF OFFENCE* §. To which declarations we may add another, which is no less pertinent than either of the former. *IT IS WRITTEN*, saith the apostle of the Gentiles, *behold, I lay in Zion A STUMBLING STONE AND ROCK OF OFFENCE* ||.

From the application of this prediction, then, by these unerring writers, there cannot, you see, be the least doubt, who is designed by the superb

* *Is. viii. 13—16.* † *Luke ii. 23—35.* § *1 Pet. ii. 5—7.*

|| *Rom. ix. 33.*

perb title, *The Lord of Hosts*, as mentioned in the before cited prophecy. The Lord Jesus Christ is, certainly, the person, on whom that illustrious title is conferred; and therefore his Divine Nature must, I should think, be clearly exhibited to us in that prediction.

NEO. The passages you have quoted, contain an awful and alarming truth, with respect to the enemies of the gospel, but, at the same time, they certainly show, in a conspicuous manner, that the Lord Jesus Christ is, indeed, the Lord of hosts who is spoken of in the prophecy.

PHIL. Almost similar to this, is that other exalted and magnificent title of our Saviour, which is *written on his Vesture, and on his Thigh*; namely, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS*. A title which, no doubt, is expressive of *supreme* authority, and *universal* dominion. Pregnant, indeed, with strong consolation to his faithful people, but, it bears a terrible aspect towards the wilful enemies of his laws and government.

To which, permit me to add, as being manifestly analagous to the foregoing title, that he is also called THE LORD OF GLORY†. Now, if those superb and illustrious titles be not expressive of a Divine Character; if they do not exhibit an irrefragable proof of the Divinity of

* Rev. xix. 16.

† 1. Cor. ii, 8.

of the person to whom they are applied ; we shall, I think, be entirely at a loss to know what doth *really* characterize the Deity, and sufficiently distinguish him from all created beings. For, upon such a supposition, the scriptures may, in my opinion, be charged with gross impropriety, since these are the very titles which he assumes as declarative of his nature, and expressive of his sovereign dominion.

I hope you are now clearly convinced, both of the absolute certainty of those titles being given to Christ, and of the striking evidence which they exhibit of his perfect equality with the Father.

NEO. The numerous passages of the sacred scripture which have been produced, I own, are, to me, so clear, and free from ambiguity, as applied to our Saviour, that I cannot, possibly, withhold my assent to them.

PHIL. The perspicuity of scripture upon this doctrine is exceedingly great ; so that in the maintaining of it, no arts of criticism are required, nor any subtle evasion of plain evidence ; but only a brief collection of the almost numberless texts, in which it is so plainly exhibited to our view. Whereas, in the opposing of it, to give any plausible arguments against the texts produced, all the arts of criticism must be exhausted, and the meanest prevarications made use of ; the inspired writings must be tortured
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in the most excruciating manner, to make them speak what they never meant ; and the greatest violence used with the plainest, and most important declarations.

But I press on to consider another of those titles which are applied to our blessed Lord ; namely, that glorious and perfect one which is applicable to none but the Diety. **THE FIRST AND THE LAST ***. Now, this title is, unquestionably, characteristic of him, who is the first cause and the last end of all things. Hear his own declaration : *I am THE FIRST, and I am THE LAST, and besides me there is no God †. And again : Who hath called the generations from the beginning ? I the Lord, THE FIRST, and with THE LAST, I am he ‡. How God-like the expressions ! They are, surely, too sublime to be used by, or affirmed of, any created being !*

If, then, the Lord Jesus Christ assume this title as his own, he must, certainly, either partake of proper Divinity, or otherwise be accounted a daring invader of the unalienable rights of the Supreme Majesty. And that he doth actually assume it, is, in my apprehension, undeniably evident. *I, says he, to his beloved, though exiled disciple, am ALPHA AND OMEGA, the beginning and the end ¶. And again : I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, THE FIRST AND THE LAST §. NEO.*

* Rev. xxii. 13. † Is. xlv. 6. ‡ Ib. xli. 4. ¶ Rev. xxi. 6.

§ Ib. xxii. 13.

NEO. "These high titles," some think, "are attributed to Jesus with respect to the state of glory, and universal dominion, to which he is exalted by the Father."

PHIL. That cannot be. For these titles can never, without the greatest absurdity, be attributed to any mere creature, to what dignity soever his nature may be exalted. Besides, that those very titles, which are the distinctive characters of the Creator, should, notwithstanding, be given to a creature, and that in the most absolute manner too, is highly improbable; and therefore can never, one would think, be admitted by those who "make use of the rational faculties which God has given them."

NEO. The supposition, is, indeed, very improbable; if not absurd. The illustrator, however, affirms, that, "It is plain, from many passages in the book of Revelation, that the author of it considered Christ as a person subordinate to the Father, and the minister of his will, and therefore no single expression should be interpreted in such a manner as to make it imply the contrary."

PHIL. We never assert, that Christ, in every point of view, is equal with the Father. No. The illustrious person called Christ* is, we believe,

* This name of our Lord is exactly of the same import with the

lieve, a complex subject, and includes both his Divine Nature, which is called the WORD, and his human nature, and mediatorial office; on which accounts he is called the *only-begotten Son of God*. Now in these two latter respects, he is, we allow, "subordinate to the Father, and the minister of his will;" but that "*therefore* no single expression should be interpreted so as to imply his Divine Nature" is certainly a very singular, and, at the same time, a very unjust conclusion; and evidently betrays the weakness or fallacy of that cause which it was designed to support.

On the whole: Since our Lord is emphatically and without limitation called *the first and the last*, and hath all the distinguishing titles of Deity applied to him; the natural conclusion is, that, either he is truly and without a figure what those titles are expressive of, or, otherwise, he hath greatly deceived us in the most momentous things. But this can never be supposed of the *faithful and true witness*, being totally inconsistent

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the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ (Messiah) to which it frequently answers in the Septuagint. So the apostle John informs us, John i. 42. that ΜESSIAS being interpreted is ὁ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ (Christ). And its primary signification is *the anointed*; or it is expressive of one *instituted to a certain office, or offices by unction*; and therefore when it is applied to the Saviour of the world, it imports his being anointed with the *Holy Ghost* and with *power*, and must therefore certainly include his inferior nature. See Parkhurst's Lex. on the words.

with the integrity of his character; and therefore, he must be properly Divine.

NEO. You have greatly comforted my mind with the consideration of this glorious subject; and *My spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour* *. Methinks I feel something of the emotions which arose in the mind of Thomas, on that rapturous exclamation of his, *My Lord and my God* † !

But I have another difficulty, which I will beg leave to propose before we leave this part of the subject, which is this: "The writer of the book of the revelation," it is affirmed, "evidently speaking of Christ in his highest capacity, uses the following expressions. *These things saith the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning, or the most excellent, of the creation of God*; which plainly implies that, how excellent soever he may be, he is but a creature."

PHIL. Were the sacred writer speaking of Christ in his highest capacity, in the text you have quoted, the conclusion, I grant, would be plain and obvious. But this is far from being the case. On the contrary, it is evident, from the terms which he uses, that he is *not* speaking of Christ in this point of view; they being certainly expressive of his character as the *Mediator* between God and men, and point out his faithfulness and veracity in the performing of it. The last expression, indeed, shows that he has a
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* Luke i. 47.

† John xx. 28.

created nature, but *that*, we apprehend, is no way inconsistent with his having, likewise, an uncreated and self-existent one, and consequently the argument is inconclusive.

The plain state of the case is this : ‘ We assert that Christ is God and man ; the latter is allowed ; we prove the former from the ascription of divine *names*, titles, &c. to him.’ To which our opponents reply, “ Christ is considered as a person subordinate to the Father, in many passages of the scriptures, and even, in his highest character, is spoken of as a creature, and therefore no single expression should be interpreted in such a manner as to make it imply the contrary ;” namely, that he is in any respect equal with the Father. This, in plain terms, is to say, ‘ Those scriptures which speak of the names, titles, &c. of our Saviour cannot mean what they seem to express ; he cannot be God, because he is man.’ But by what rules of logic is such a conclusion drawn ? It is certainly a curious one, and, some may be apt to think, shows an amazing fertility of invention.

There is however, one peculiar advantage attending the preceding general reply ; and on which account I apprehend it is chosen by our adversaries ; I mean, the getting rid of the insuperable difficulty, of explaining the almost numberless texts of scripture which we produce, in favour of our Saviour’s Deity. “ They are not to be interpreted contrary to our ideas,” being

ing given as a sufficient reply to them all. But, whether this be not to free themselves from a difficulty, at the expence of a most egregious and palpable absurdity, viz. the exploding of a considerable part of the word of God, I leave you and every unprejudiced person to determine.

NEO. The persons who deny the Deity of our Lord, ought, in my opinion, to shew, that for the divine and human natures to be united in him, is impossible, or that those names, titles, &c. which are given to him in the scripture, are improperly applied; or, that they are not distinctive of the character of God.

PHIL. Certainly they ought; for, we must *then* give up the cause, as being absolutely and wholly untenable. But until that be effected, which I am persuaded it is not in their power to do, the doctrine will, I believe, appear with a sufficient degree of evidence, to “those who are *serious*, and will take pains to *read and think*.” It will, I doubt not, appear to them, *as the light of the morning when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds* *.

Permit me further to observe upon this part of the subject, that all those illustrious titles of our Saviour, which have been mentioned in our present conversation, being expressive of his real character, are pregnant with consolation to every sincere disciple of his, and afford a secure
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* 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

asylum in the day of trouble*. May we, then, dwell upon them in our daily meditations, may we be solicitous to know every title which our glorious Master sustains, that our confidence in him may be strengthened, our love to him be increased, and, by thus beholding his glory, be changed into a greater conformity to his most glorious and God-like image † !

NEO. Our conversation at this time, Philanthropos, will, I hope, be greatly conducive to my spiritual advantage, and afford me peculiar pleasure in my future reflections upon it. The glories of him whom my soul loveth §, shall be the frequent theme of my future meditations, and I shall, I trust, be enabled *to grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ* ‡.

PHIL. That what you have now expressed may be the case with you, with me, and with all who *love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity* ||, is my daily prayer, and I hope will continue to be so to the end of life.—Time will not now admit of any further conversation upon this subject, we must therefore for the present, bid a mutual adieu.

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* Prov. xviii. 10. † 2 Cor. iii. 18. § Sol. Song iii. 2.

‡ Eph. iv. 15. || Eph. vi. 24.

DIALOGUE IV.

NEO. **W**HEN we first entered upon the present subject, you proposed, Philanthropos, if I mistake not, to shew, that the *perfections* of Deity are attributed to Christ, and that he is actually possessed of them.

PHIL. That the perfections, even *all* the perfections of Godhead, are applied to our Saviour, and in the most absolute manner too, I hope to make appear to you in the clearest light. And if this be plainly attested in *the scripture of truth*; if the sacred writings, which were given to be *a lamp to our feet and a light unto our paths* *, exhibit the GREAT MEDIATOR in this point of view, his Divinity will, certainly, be an incontrovertible truth, and stand upon an impregnable basis.

NEO. If the distinguishing characters of Deity are shewn in scripture to be applied to our blessed Lord, it must, I should think, be universally admitted as an indubitable truth, that he is, indeed, a Divine Person.

PHIL.

* Psal. cxix. 105.

PHIL. Yes; either that must be admitted, or the scriptures totally rejected. There is no other alternative. For, to suppose that these perfections can be communicated to any creature, is the grossest absurdity. If they are not *communicable*, they must be *essential* to him who possesses them. And if they are essential, and affirmed of our Saviour, then he is, unquestionably, *by nature* GOD *.

But, lest you should think that any thing is asserted without due proof, we will, if you please, investigate the sacred writings upon this important subject; and, from the plainest declarations contained in them, the truth of the proposition will most evidently appear.

NEO. I shall with pleasure attend to the discussion of this argument, and freely mention any difficulty which occurs to my mind, while you are illustrating its various parts.

PHIL. ETERNITY, then, is one of the essential, and incommunicable attributes of the Supreme Being, which can never be ascribed to any created nature. It is *essential* to him, whose peculiar prerogative it is, to have existed even FROM EVERLASTING †. For, if God were not eternal, he would neither be unchangeable in his nature, nor perfect in his being.—And, it is absolutely *incommunicable*; for the supposition of eternity being communicated, entire-

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* Gal. ix, 8. † Psal. xc. 2.

68 DIVINE PERFECTIONS Dial. IV.

ly destroys the idea which we have of it; since *that being* who is dependent upon another for existence, can never, in the proper sense of the word, be called *eternal*.

If, then, to have an eternal existence be the unalienable property of him, *who was, and is, and is to come**, for any *created being* to assume this high prerogative to himself, would be a great, and manifest infringement upon the royal honours of Jehovah, and amount to the highest blasphemy. So that, were the Lord Jesus Christ only *a man like ourselves*, or, if he were even *an angel* of the highest order, if, in short, he was not the *most high God*, to speak of himself as having an eternal existence, would be “an impious robbery” or usurpation indeed! A robbery, of which we can never suppose he would be guilty, unless he were actuated by the most detestable principles.

NEO. But some think that, “Christ may be supposed to have *pre-existed*, or to have had a being before he was born of the virgin Mary, without supposing him to be the eternal God.”

PHIL. Very true. But, even upon that supposition, he must, I should think, be *something more than* “a man, consisting of the same constituent parts, and of the same rank with ourselves;” unless we can suppose that men in general pre-exist before they are born into our world,

* Rev. i. 4.

world. This is indeed so obvious a truth, that those in general, who believe the pre-existence of Christ, before his appearance among men, and yet deny his proper Deity, “suppose him to be an *intermediate* being betwixt God and man, a *super-angelic* divine spirit united to a human body.”

But it is not merely Christ’s pre-existence that we insist upon, but his *eternal* existence, and if this can be proved, we have the strongest evidence that we possibly can have, that he is truly and properly Divine.

NEO. *That* I think is clear; and I long to hear the proof which the scriptures give of it.

PHIL. I shall begin with the declarations of *the faithful and true witness* himself, whose assertions must, unquestionably, be deemed infallible. Our Lord, then, when conversing with the Jews, upon their expressing their amazement that he who was not as yet *fifty years old*, should, notwithstanding, *have seen Abraham*, made this remarkable affirmation. *Before Abraham was, I AM* *.

Now this assertion appeared to those who heard it, so direct a claim to the name and properties of the GREAT JEHOVAH, that they thought it intolerable blasphemy; and so great was their resentment against the assertor, that, though he was then in so sacred a place as the

* John viii. 58.

the temple, yet *they took up stones to cast at him*. Besides, the striking introduction to the words is deserving of particular notice. *Verily, verily*, says he, which double asseveration, neither the prophets, nor apostles, nor, indeed, did Jesus himself ever use, but when he would confirm truths the most important and the most opposed.

NEO. "The meaning of the passage," some think, "clearly is, that Abraham *foresaw* the day of Christ, and that Christ was the subject of prophecy before the times of Abraham."

PHIL. That is, I allow, the meaning of a preceding sentence of our Lord's discourse, when he says, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad**. Which "saying of our Lord is certainly illustrated by what the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says concerning all the ancient worthies, namely, that *they all died in faith, not having received the promises, but HAVING SEEN THEM AFAR OFF*;" but, the passage in hand is by no means similar to the above-cited one, as will evidently appear by considering the context. For, upon the above affirmation of Christ, the Jews immediately replied, *Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?* To which our Saviour answered, *Verily verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am*. So that the sentence you see, is a direct answer to a question of the Jews,

* John viii. 56.

Jews, concerning his existence; in which, it should seem, he has a particular reference to the name of the *Supreme Being*, which was made known to Moses, when he was sent to deliver the chosen tribes from the oppressive yoke of Pharoah: I mean, the glorious name, I AM THAT I AM *; which, as well as the name JEHOVAH, is expressive of a necessary and self-existence.

NEO. "Little stress, however, it is said, can be laid upon this, since, though the same phrase occurs very often in the history of Christ, our translators themselves, in every place excepting this, render it by, *I am he*; that is, I am the Christ. It is used in this sense in the 24th verse of the chapter. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.* And again in the 28th verse, *When ye shall lift up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he.* That the words *I am* in this place do not mean the eternal God, is manifest from the words which are immediately connected with these; *then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father hath taught me I speak these things.*"

PHIL. Admitting your sense of the text above quoted, the argument which we draw from the above-mentioned passage, to prove the eternal existence of Christ, is not in the least weakened; on the contrary, 'it stands as clearly evinced

* Ex. iii. 14.

72. DIVINE PERFECTIONS Dial. IV.

evinced from his manner of speaking, compared with the preceding and subsequent contexts, as if he had used that similar expression of the self-existent God, *Before the day was I am he* *.' And though the Jews frequently strained the words of Christ, to make them express something which he never intended by them, yet this does not seem to have been the case in the present instance. For, though they were about to stone him as a blasphemer, when he used this expression, yet he did not so much as hint that they misunderstood him, but instantly rendered himself invisible, and by that means escaped out of their hands.

Besides, that there is a great difference between the expression *I am*, in the text which I have quoted, and the phrase *I am he*, in the preceding verses, evidently appears from this circumstance, namely, that the use of the latter gave no apparent umbrage to the Jews, for many of them are said to have *believed in him* †, whereas, the former inflamed their malevolent tempers, and was the true cause of their atrocious attempts to stone him. So that, after all the repeated and wily efforts which have been made to invalidate the text, it still remains a striking proof, of the eternal existence of our blessed Lord.

NEO. Its evidence is certainly strong and forcible, and gives full satisfaction to my mind,
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* If. xliii. 13. † John viii. 30.

of what it is designed to prove. The *familiar illustration* of it which I have read, is, I think, quite foreign to the true design of the Speaker, and by no means agrees with the construction of the words.

PHIL. Left, however, we should mistake in a thing of so important a nature, our Lord has repeated, and reindulcated the glorious truth. In his intercessory prayer, which he offered to his Father, previous to his bearing the divine wrath, are these remarkable words. *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee BEFORE THE WORLD WAS* *.

From which passage nothing, I think, can be more obvious, than that the glorious Petitioner had an existence, before the *everlasting mountains* were settled, or the *perpetual hills* † were formed. If there be any meaning in language ; if words can convey any ideas ; then, certainly, those which have now been quoted, are expressive of the pre-existence of Christ, to our world ; of a glory which he actually enjoyed before ever he tabernacled among men.

NEO. But some persons affirm, that, “ it is easy to explain the text which you have mentioned, of the glory which was intended for him in the councils of God before all time. Nay this, it is asserted, must necessarily be our Lord’s

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meaning

* John xvii, 5. † Hab, iii, 6.

74 DIVINE PERFECTIONS Dial. IV.

meaning in this place; since in many other places the power and glory which were conferred upon Christ are expressly said to be the reward of his obedience, and to be subsequent to his resurrection from the dead."

PHIL. Our Lord, however, speaks expressly of a glory which he had actually enjoyed, and not merely of a glory which was *intentionally* his; and indeed, if this only were his meaning, every believer might, with equal propriety, adopt the petition and use it for himself. But how amazingly absurd, not to say blasphemous, would it be, for any disciple of Christ to pray, for the enjoyment of a glory which he actually possessed before all time! Such an explication of the text, therefore, is, certainly, a perversion of our Lord's meaning; and, in my opinion, is doing very great injustice to it.

Besides; the reason which is assigned for the support of it, is not at all to the purpose; nor has it the least degree of force or conviction in it. For, that the glory our Lord spoke of, was only "a glory intended for him in the councils of God before all time," cannot *necessarily* follow, from power and glory being conferred upon him as the reward of his obedience; however, the necessity of such a conclusion from these premises is, I confess, beyond the extent of my reasoning powers.

NEO. Christ might, to be sure, have glory conferred upon him as the reward of his *mediatorial undertaking*; and yet, in a perfect consistency with that, have had glory with the FATHER before the world was.

PHIL. Certainly so; and if you consult the sacred scriptures upon this head, you will find, that, they no less explicitly declare that our Lord had glory previous to his assuming our nature, than, that he hath a name given him above every name because he did actually assume it, and, in that nature, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. We ought therefore to believe *both* these assertions, 'nor should any person presume to deny the one, because he acknowledges the other, till he has shewn that they are absolutely inconsistent.'

That Christ had not *that* glory before he *took upon him the seed of Abraham** which was conferred upon him as the reward of his obedience unto death, and therefore was subsequent to his resurrection, we readily grant. Indeed, this glory will, in some measure at least, when the work of mediation is fully accomplished, be laid aside, *that God may be all in all*†. But the glory of which the text speaks, was that in which *he was rich*, previous to his state of humiliation, when *for our sakes, he became poor*‡. It was that which he enjoyed when he was in

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* Heb. ii. 16.

† 1 Cor. xv. 28.

‡ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

76 DIVINE PERFECTIONS Dial. IV.

the FORM of GOD, before he took upon him *the form of a servant*, or *was made in the likeness of men* *.

On the whole ; the import of our Lord's petition in the above-cited text, I apprehend, is, That the *whole person* might partake of those divine glories, which for a while had been as it were eclipsed, and which he in his human nature had, as yet, never enjoyed.

NEO. The passage is, indeed, a strong proof of the pre-existence of Christ, and seems directly in point in the present case.

PHIL. Yes ; these assertions of our Lord are full to the purpose, and it will be extremely difficult for the opposers of this doctrine to overturn or invalidate the arguments deduced from them. I will further add that, as Jesus peremptorily affirmed the divine perfection of eternity with respect to himself, it is also frequently asserted of him by the inspired writers.

NEO. Be so kind as give me a few instances of this ?

PHIL. The prophet Micah, in a prediction concerning the birth of Christ, has this remarkable expression. *His goings forth have been from of old*, FROM EVERLASTING † ; or, according to the import of the original word, *from the days of eternity* §.

NEO.

* Phil. ii. 6—9.

† Micah. v. 2.

§ See Margin.

NEO. "This prophecy, it is thought, may be understood concerning the promises of God, in which the coming of Christ was signified to mankind from the beginning of the world."

PHIL. By attending to the whole of the prediction, with honest minds, we may easily discern, that the prophet had something more in view, than merely the promises of the coming of Christ. His thoughts were carried considerably further back, than even to the original declaration respecting the *seed of the woman*. His words are these: *But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*

Now the contrast, you see, is between the Divinity and humanity of Christ; or between what he then *was*, and what he afterwards *should be*. With respect to his human nature, he was to *come forth out of Bethlehem Ephratah*, but as to his Divine Nature he existed *from everlasting*. So that these words of the prophet are a full and decisive proof of what they were produced for, that is to say, the *eternal existence* of the Lord Jesus Christ.

NEO. But what do you apprehend the prophet means by the phrase *His goings forth*?

PHIL. His acts of grace and love towards his people; his engaging as their surety, and e-

78 DIVINE PERFECTIONS Dial. IV.

spousing their cause. And hence the apostle declares that, *Grace was given us in Christ Jesus BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN* *.

NEO. How comfortable the thought ! How charming the declaration ! The *length* of the love of Christ, then, *passeth knowledge*, as well as its *breadth*, and *depth*, and *height* † !

PHIL. Yes ; and the antiquity of it should often employ our closest meditations.

But I pass on to observe that, the Baptist, likewise, the glorious forerunner of the Messiah, bears a noble attestation to his Master's pre-existent state. *After me*, cried this messenger of God, *cometh a man, who is preferred before me, for HE WAS BEFORE ME* ‡. Which declaration must respect his superior nature ; since otherwise it could not possibly be true ; for, as to his existence as a *man*, *that* was some months after John himself was brought into being.

I am almost afraid of exhausting your patience, Neophytus, but as this point is of great importance, in the debate concerning the Divinity of Christ ; I cannot forbear the introducing of another passage, which directly, and peremptorily affirms it.

NEO. So far am I from being weary of the subject, that to break off here, would be in some measure painful to me ; nay, would in some degree frustrate my expectations concerning it.

PHIL.

* 2 Tim. i. 9.

† Eph. iii. 18, 19.

‡ John i. 30.

PHIL. The apostle John, in the very entrance of his gospel, affirms that, *IN THE BEGINNING was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was IN THE BEGINNING with God**. In which sentence, the Divine Nature of Christ is particularly pointed out to us, and, as a cogent proof of it, the sacred writer insists upon his eternal existence.

NEO. "The words which you have quoted, interpreted in the most literal manner", it is said, "only imply that *the Word*, or Christ, had a being before the creation of the world; that he had the title of *God*, or *a God*, and was the instrument by whom the SUPREME GOD made all things; but they by no means imply that he

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was

* John i. 1. That *Εν αρχη* (*in the beginning*) in this connexion, is expressive of proper eternity, may be proved both from the use of the word elsewhere, and the apparent design of the sacred writer in this place.—*From the use of the word elsewhere*: God hath *from the beginning* (*ἐκ' αρχης*) chosen you to salvation. Which choice, the same apostle assures us, was made before the foundation of the world. Eph. i. 4. And *from the scope of the apostle's argument*: His primary design is to establish the doctrine of Christ's Deity; to effect which, he asserts, not only that *all things were created by him*, but that he himself existed in the beginning. And if he existed prior to the creation, then he existed eternally; for whatever was before time is eternal. Now this the apostle is designing to prove, and therefore to explain the words in any other sense, would entirely destroy the force of his argument. But, when the phrase is understood as being expressive of eternity, it is a most glorious proof of the Divinity of the Person; and therefore the apostle asserts plainly, *That the Word was GOD*.

80 DIVINE PERFECTIONS Dial. IV.

was *true* and *very* GOD ; for magistrates, and others, are sometimes called *Gods*, on account of their power and dominion, in which, they resemble *God*. Nay the *derivation* of Christ from *the Father*, and consequently his *dependence* upon him, is sufficiently expressed by his being called, in the 14th verse, *the only begotten of the Father.*"

PHIL. If *Christ*, or *the Word*, had an existence before the creation of the world, he had, certainly, an *eternal* existence. For, whoever believes the Mosaic account of the creation, must, I think, allow, that when the inspired writer says, *In the beginning, God created the HEAVENS and the EARTH**, he meant to include the whole system of created beings ; and therefore whoever, or whatever, subsisted previous to that beginning, must have existed eternally. If, then, *the Word* had a being before time, or, what is the same thing, before creation began, he must be God naturally and necessarily, and not merely by *office*, since *that* term implies a relation to created beings.

As to what is observed relative to the improper use of the appellation *God*, when applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, because magistrates and others are so called, I have already replied to it †, and to add any thing further upon that head is, I believe unnecessary.

Nor

* Gen. i. 1. † See Dial. 2, pages 29—32.

Nor is that phrase which you have mentioned, namely, *the only begotten of the Father*, when applied to Christ, any proof that he is not God. For supposing we allow, which I am willing to do, that it is expressive of derivation, and consequently of dependence, yet, unless his *Deity* be founded upon his *Sonship*, the argument from the preceding words is not in the least weakened, nor its force at all abated.

NEO. You apprehend, then, that the term *Word*, as used in the above-mentioned text, is designed to point out to us the DIVINE NATURE of our blessed Lord.

PHIL. Yes; and therefore the sacred writer declares, that, *The Word*, and not the Son, *was made flesh, and dwelt among us**. On which account, he is, in the subsequent part of the verse, called *the begotten* of the Father; and as no other man was thus begotten by the immediate agency of God, he is properly and strictly the *only begotten Son*; or, as this apostle elsewhere calls him, *The Son of the Father in truth and love*†.

Notwithstanding then we allow that the term *son*, imports derivation and dependence, and though we further allow that *Christ*, as a *Son*, has a derived and dependent nature; yet, as the *Word*, who was *with God* and *was God*, he certainly exists as necessarily and indepently, as the Father and the Holy Ghost. Hence this
writer

* John i. 14. † 2 John iii.

82 DIVINE PERFECTIONS Dial. IV.

writer informs us in another place, that *there are three who bear record in heaven, the FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY GHOST, and that these three are one**. They partake of one glorious undivided nature.

NEO. To me, what you have observed, is quite satisfactory. But the *illustrator* before mentioned says, "It appears to him, that the apostle does not speak of the pre-existence of Christ in this place; but only of the power and wisdom of God, which dwelt, or tabernacled in his flesh."

PHIL. Nothing can be more obvious, than that the apostle does not speak of a *quality* but of one who sustains a personal character. Indeed, if this were not the case, the reasoning of the inspired writer, like that of the mystic divines, would be mere jargon, and absolute nonsense. Take the bible, Neophytus, and read over the whole passage, substituting *power*, or energy, instead of the divine Name, WORD; and you will, I am persuaded, immediately discern the great impropriety of the illustration which you have mentioned.

NEO. *In the beginning was POWER, and POWER was with God, and POWER was God. All things were made by POWER, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In POWER*
was

was life, and the life was the light of men.— And POWER was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld HIS glory, that is, the glory of power made flesh, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Why, this reading is grossly absurd, Philanthropos ; and makes the inspired writer, as you have already observed, speak mere nonsense indeed !—This could never therefore be his real meaning.

PHIL. Certainly it could not. For, if it were, it would greatly reflect upon the Divine Spirit, by whose immediate agency the holy scriptures were, confessedly, written. So that, while common sense is retained, all the arts of transposition, and the subtleties of criticism will never, I believe, be able to invalidate the striking evidence of the Deity of Christ, which arises from this single text.

NEO. Well might the great Teacher of his church say, *Search the scriptures, for they are they which testify of me* †. To testify of Christ is, I perceive, their peculiar and distinguishing excellency ; and the testimony which they bear, is truly glorious.

PHIL. Yes, and I will add that, this is the true reason, why they are so exceedingly precious to every believer, so that he makes them
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* John i. 1.—14. † Ib. v. 39.

84 DIVINE PERFECTIONS Dial. IV.

his bosom companion *. And when opened in this view, they frequently cause our heart, like that of the two disciples going to Emmaus, *to burn* within us, and glow with a flame of sacred affection.

But let us now proceed to consider some other of those perfections which are ascribed to Christ. And the next which I shall mention, is *immutability*. Now this is certainly an essential attribute of the *Godhead*. It is the peculiar prerogative of that glorious Being, *with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning* §. Let us hear the language of JEHOVAH himself upon this point. *I am the Lord, I change not* †.

Indeed, his name JEHOVAH, being expressive of *necessary* existence, is a sufficient reason for the proof of his absolute immutability. For, whatever, or whoever, exists *necessarily*, must, undoubtedly, exist *perpetually*. So that this perfection of the DIVINE BEING, can never, without the greatest impropriety, imaginable be affirmed of any created nature.

NEO. But is this perfection of the uncreated nature clearly applied to Jesus ?

PHIL. It is both appropriated by our Lord himself, and affirmed of him by others. The passage which has already been produced as a proof of the eternity of Jesus, is no less a proof of his absolute immutability. When he calls himself

* Psal. cxix. 97, 98. § Jam. i. 17. † Mal. iii. 6.

himself the I AM, which is nearly similar to the name Jehovah, as it proves that he existed necessarily and eternally, so it equally proves that his nature knows no change. It shews, demonstrably, that there is not *with him*, any more than with the Father of mercies, the least *variableness or shadow of turning*.

And the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, being fully persuaded of this truth, affirms that, *Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to day, and for ever* *.

NEO. Some think that, in the place which you have mentioned, the apostle “only means to express the unchangeableness of the doctrine of Christ, as the connection of it with what goes before and after, makes very evident.” *Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.—Be not carried away with diverse and strange doctrines.*

PHIL. The context, when properly considered, is so far from making against our sense of the words, that, on the contrary, it strongly confirms, and fully establishes it. The rulers, or pastors of the churches, were to be examples to their respective flocks, particularly in *conversation*. The believers were to consider this with attention, and to mark the *end*, or the

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* Heb. xiii. 8.

86 DIVINE PERFECTIONS Dial. IV.

main scope and design of it ; which the apostle says, was *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.*

Now the glories of the *person* of Christ would, surely, be one of the chief of those things relating to him, which they would delight to converse upon. And, as they knew well his Divine Character ; as they believed him to be the *unchangeable* GOD, so they boldly affirmed that he was without variableness or shadow of turning.

The preceding context, then, favours our construction, and the subsequent one is equally as much to our purpose. Be not carried about with *diverse* and *strange* doctrines : such as the denial of the divinity, atonement, and Offices of Christ, and diverse others of a similar nature ; which are as *strange* as they are different, being directly foreign to the form of sound words which you have heard, and cordially received.

NEO. Your observations, indeed, evidently show, that something more is intended, in the last-cited text, than merely the unchangeableness of the *doctrine of Christ*, and, I think, the invariableness of *his nature* is clearly exhibited.

PHIL. Another passage, then, shall suffice for this part of the argument. It is mentioned in the same epistle, and is directly in point with respect to our present subject of enquiry.

Thou

Dial. IV. ASCRIBED TO CHRIST. 87

*Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands; they shall perish, but THOU REMAINEST; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but THOU ART THE SAME, and THY YEARS SHALL NOT FAIL *.*

NEO. But it is affirmed, that these words are “an address to God, as the great *Creator* and everlasting *Ruler* of the universe, but without any hint of their being applied to *Christ*.”

PHIL. You have the “bible at hand, turn to the passage, and read what goes before it, and I have no doubt but, by this means, you will see much reason” to believe, that there is not only a hint but *something more than a hint* of its being applied immediately to our Saviour; and, that there is, in fact, even a full demonstration of it. Begin, if you please, at the seventh verse..

NEO. *And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the SON he saith,——*

PHIL. You observe, Neophytus, that the SON is the object who is now addressed; and therefore, what follows, till we have some clear notice of the *change* of the object, must, certainly be applied to him. Now read on.

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NEO.

* Heb. 1, 10, 11.

88 DIVINE PERFECTIONS Dial. IV.

NEO. But unto the Son he saith, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* — And THOU Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth.

PHIL. Can any thing be more plain, than that the last sentence is a continued address to the SON? We may with equal propriety deny the former sentence to have reference to him, as the latter, and with exactly the same degree of truth affirm, That the SON is not addressed, when it is said directly to him *Thy throne O God is for ever*, as that he is not the object spoken to, when the inspired writer declares, *Thou, Lord, in the beginning, &c.*

NEO. The apostle, indeed, gives more than a hint, with respect to the application of those words to our Saviour, and has, to me at least, demonstrably proved, that Christ is the sole object of the glorious address. And, oh! how charming the truth which they exhibit to our view!

PHIL. Charming indeed! May you and I continually live under the power and influence of it! May we consider the absolute unchangeableness of our adored Redeemer, as a sure support, amid the incessantly changing scenes of time; and comfort ourselves with this thought, That he RESTS in his love*! But I must for the present bid you adieu.

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* Zeph. 3. 17.

DIALOGUE V.

PHIL. **I**N our last conversation, Neophytus, we observed, that the Divine perfections of *eternity*, and *immutability*, were, in the inspired writings, both appropriated by our Lord to himself, and applied to him by others. Let us now go on to observe, that *omnipotence*, is also claimed by Jesus, in the most absolute sense, as being an essential, and unalienable perfection of his nature.

NEO. Be so kind then, as to mention the passages, to which you refer, as the proof of your assertion, that I may deposit them in my mind for my future consideration.

PHIL. After our Lord had healed the impotent man, who had been troubled with an infirmity thirty-eight years, and said unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk; the Jews, we are told, as soon as they were informed of this, *persecuted him, and sought to slay him, because, as they observed, he had done these things on the sab-*

90 DIVINE PERFECTIONS Dial. V.

bath-day. To which charge he gave this remarkable and striking reply, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I WORK* *. 'He does not say, My Father worketh *by* me; but, I work in concert *with* the Father. I perform the same marvellous things, from the same underived power, and by the same supreme authority.'

I might, with great propriety, in the proof of this argument, enumerate the many and stupendous *works* of Christ, as so many instances of a divine power; but, as I design to consider *them* in a distinct and particular manner, I shall wave them at present; and subjoin only the testimony of an apostle, that *Christ is ABLE even to SUBDUE ALL THINGS to himself* †.

NEO. To be possessed of a power to subdue *all things*, seems, indeed, to be too high for any created nature to be possessed of, and may therefore, for any thing that I see to the contrary, be sufficiently declarative of the omnipotence of Christ.

PHIL. And as omnipotence is claimed by our blessed Lord, so is *omniscience* too: I need not tell you, that, to know every thing, especially to search the dark and mazy heart of man, is, according to the express declaration of the scriptures, the sole prerogative of the God who is above. *I the Lord search the heart* §. The searching of the heart, then, is clearly appropriated

* John v. 5—18. † Phil. iii. 21. § Jer. xvii. 10.

priated by Jehovah to himself, as his peculiar, and distinguishing perfection. All other beings, how knowing soever in their nature, are entirely excluded here. For the heart of man *is deceitful above all things*, it has, as it were, ten thousand serpentine windings, *who CAN know it * ?* The question carries a strong negation in it, and absolutely denies the possession of this knowledge to any created existence. And hence Solomon, in a public address to God at the dedication of the temple, uses these words ; *Thou, even thou ONLY knowest the hearts of all the children of men †*. So that this is an incommunicable glory.

Yet the SON of GOD, *who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire*,—saith,—*All the churches shall know, that I AM HE WHO SEARCHETH THE REINS AND HEARTS §*. Which declaration, is so direct and immediate a claim to the above-mentioned character of GOD, that, were not the glorious Declarer truly one with the Father; did he not properly partake of the divine perfection of omniscience, he might be deemed a bold and daring blasphemer : For, our blessed Saviour, in the text now quoted, asserts his knowledge of the human heart, in those very expressions which Jehovah himself used by the prophet, and he applies them in the most direct, and emphatical manner too.

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* 1 Chron. vi, 30.

† Verse 9.

§ Rev. ii, 18,—24.

I appeal then, to you, Neophytus, and to every ingenuous and unprejudiced enquirer, whether, if our Lord were only *a man*, of the same rank with ourselves, it would not have been the most palpable absurdity, and impious blasphemy, to have spoken in so divine, and God-like a strain?

NEO. It certainly would: But there are persons who say, that "Christ being appointed the *king* and *judge* of men, has powers given him adapted to those offices, especially the knowledge of the human heart." They further add, "We ought not, therefore, to be surprized at those expressions, which speak of Christ knowing the *thoughts of men* *, and knowing *what was in man* †."

PHIL. With respect to the above-cited text, we may observe, that, if the illustrious Speaker did not intend to apply it to himself, in the sense in which it is used by the prophet; if he meant to speak of the knowledge of the human heart, as a "power only *given* to him of GOD," he ought, certainly, to have given us a clear intimation of this; since every reader, as the passage now stands, is naturally induced to ascribe to *him*, the same knowledge of the human heart which the prophet appropriates to JEHOVAH alone. And, therefore, if the power which Christ has of searching the hearts of men, be
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* Matt. ix, 4. † John ii, 25.

only a *derivative*, or a *delegated* power, his assertion is extremely disingenuous, and amounts to a flagrant and palpable blasphemy.

The expressions that occur in the evangelists, which speak of Christ's knowing the *thoughts of men*, &c. also certainly exclude the idea of *derivative* power, and speak of it as being "*naturally inherent in himself*." A bare repetition of the passages will, I believe, be entirely sufficient to convince you of this. *Jesus did not commit himself to them, because HE KNEW ALL MEN, and NEEDED NOT THAT ANY SHOULD TESTIFY OF MAN, for he knew what was in man**. Again; *There were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,——and immediately, when Jesus PERCEIVED IN HIS SPIRIT, that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why think ye evil in your hearts †?*

So that the power of knowing the human heart, which the Lord Jesus Christ certainly has, is no *delegated* power, but absolutely essential to his nature; and, if omniscience be a character of Deity, the texts above mentioned, indubitably prove the Divinity of Christ.

NEO. They appear, indeed, directly to the point, and, with respect to myself at least, give a full conviction of Christ's omniscience.

PHIL. We will pass on, then, to consider another perfection of our Lord, which is no less

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* John ii. 24, 25. † Mark ii. 6, 7.

94 DIVINE PERFECTIONS Dial. V.

a proof of his being truly and properly God than the former ; I mean *his ubiquity*, or being in all places at the same time, which property belongs to GOD alone ; for, no created *being* can possibly be possessed thereof ; no angel ; no soul ; not even the human nature of Christ, can possibly be in more places than one at the same time, it being entirely inconsistent with the idea of a created and finite existence.

Our Lord, however, in his nocturnal conference with Nicodemus, assured him, that, at the very moment he was conversing with him, he was also in heaven. His words are these. *No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is IN HEAVEN**.

NEO. But it is said “ If Christ could be in heaven, at the same time that he was on earth, conversing with Nicodemus ; it is plain, that his being said to have come down from heaven, cannot necessarily imply that he had ever been any where but on the earth.”

PHIL. We do not argue from the phrase *came down*, but from his being IN HEAVEN at the very moment when he was conversing with the Jewish ruler on earth, which amazing property we must still insist, can only be affirmed of HIM whom *the heaven of heavens cannot contain* §. So that this declaration of our Lord, taken

* John iii. 13. § 2 Chron. vi. 18.

taken in the most natural and obvious sense, is, I think, a clear and decisive proof of his Divine Nature.

The same soul-comforting truth is equally clear, from the various promises which Jesus has made, of his special presence with his true disciples, in all their acts of social worship. As when he says, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there AM I IN THE MIDST of them* *. And again; to the glorious commission which he gave to the preachers of the gospel after his resurrection, we find the following additional, and encouraging sentence annexed. *Lo! I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, even to the end of the world* †.

Now, were our Saviour *a man only*, these declarations are grossly absurd, and cannot, possibly, in the nature of things, be accomplished by him. For, on that supposition, so far from being *wherever* two or three are gathered together, that he certainly could not be in more than one place at the same moment; and therefore, if he was pleased at any time to visit the American colonies, all his worshipping assemblies in Europe must, for a while at least, be entirely devoid of his presence, how earnestly soever they might desire and request it.

Besides, if he were *only* a man, whether he would *ever* be present in our world, till he came in the clouds of heaven, deserves to be seriously
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* Matt, xviii. 20.

† Ib, xxviii. 20.

considered; and the rather, since he himself declared, a little before his exaltation, *And now I am NO MORE in the world**; and the apostle Peter afterward confirmed this, by saying that, *The heavens must RECEIVE HIM, TILL the times of restitution of all things†*.

NEO. You will give me leave to propose a difficulty or two which I have met with, relative to the texts which you have last quoted?

PHIL. Certainly; and to the best of my ability will endeavour to remove them.

NEO. With respect to the former, then, some think, that “if we consider the whole of the passage, in which our Lord is speaking of the great power of which his apostles would be possessed, and especially of the efficacy of their prayers; we shall be satisfied that he could only mean, by that form of expression, to represent their power with GOD, when they were assembled as his disciples, and prayed as became his disciples, to be the same as his own power with God; and God heard him always.”

PHIL. So far am I from being “satisfied” with the *illustration* which you have given of the text, that, after an attentive consideration of the whole passage, I think it quite foreign to our Lord’s true meaning, The efficacy of social prayer is, indeed, spoken of in the preceding verse,

* John xvii. 11. † Acts iii. 21.

verse, when he says, *If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven* *. And then he assigns a reason for it ; for, *where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

So that *his presence* being with his disciples is plainly assigned, as the sole cause of their petitions being answered ; since, it is by him alone that their prayers can be acceptable to the Father. Notwithstanding, then, that that *power with God* †, which true believers have through the Lord Jesus Christ, is clearly pointed out in the preceding context, yet, that our Lord is really present, and in an especial manner too, where his faithful disciples are met in his name, is equally evident from the last clause of the verse, **THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM.** He, like a compassionate shepherd, *feeds his flock* in the most diligent and tender manner ; *he gathers the lambs with his arm, and carrieth them in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young* ‡.

NEO. The spiritual presence of Christ with his people has, I hope, been frequently verified in my own experience. He hath often *brought me into the banquetting house, and hath spread over me his banner of love* || . But it is said that, “ our Lord could not intend to speak of himself as *the God who heareth prayer*, since he speaks of

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* Matt. xviii. 19. † Hof. xii. 3. ‡ Is. xl. 11. || Song. ii. 4.

98 DIVINE PERFECTIONS Dial. V.

the Father, in this very place, as the person who was to grant their petitions."

PHIL. ' Whether or no he intended to speak of himself as *the God who heareth prayer*, does not in the least alter the argument, since he speaks of himself as being present in various places at the same time, which is sufficient for the proof of his *omnipresence*, and that was all I brought this text to prove.' However, that our Lord meant to speak of himself, as *the God who both heareth and answereth prayer*, is not at all improbable, nay, I think, is pretty clear, from his assigning his presence with his disciples, as the cause of an answer being returned.

He is indeed the God whom they frequently, and with sufficient propriety address; and therefore, if he were not really present whenever they met together in his name, they would be liable to that bitter sarcasm, with which Elijah mocked the priests of Baal, when he tauntingly said, *Peradventure your God is gone a journey**.

What have you to observe relative to the other passage Neophytus?

NEO. " Christ," it is said, " who is constituted *head over all things* to his church, undoubtedly takes care of its interests, and attends to whatever concerns his disciples; and *being with a person*, and *taking care of him* are, in the language of scripture, equivalent expressions."

PHIL.

* 1 Kings xviii. 27.

PHIL. If our Lord “attends to *whatever* concerns his disciples,” he must, I should think, be personally present with them. And this seems to be the meaning of the phrase, in those passages of the Old Testament to which you allude.

For instance; when Moses gives us some account of Ishmael, he says, *And God WAS WITH the lad, and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness of Paran* *. Now, *being with* the lad, it is evident, means something more than merely supporting him in being, since it was an effect of the promise of God, in which he expressly declared that he would *make him a great nation* †. It must, therefore, at least, import a *favourable presence*, or being so present with him as to bless him, and do him good; to guide and preserve him *because* he was *Abraham’s seed* ‡.

If, then, *being with* a person, in the language of the Old Testament, be expressive of the favourable presence of God, that the same phrase, when used by our Saviour, should mean no presence at all, but only the concern of an absent person, is exceedingly strange, nay, absolutely incredible. So that, when the great Head of the church said to his ambassadours, *Lo I am with you*, he certainly meant what the words express, namely, a real and personal, though spiritual and invisible presence.

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* Gen. xxi. 20, 21. † Verse 18. ‡ Verse 13.

Were I to take notice of the other texts which speak of God's *being with* persons ; particularly those which have a reference to Jacob*, and Joseph †, they would, I believe, be more to the purpose than the preceding one concerning Ishmael. However, if *that* be admitted, *those* must certainly be granted.

NEO. "Christ," I am told, "having a near relation to this earth, may even be *personally present* with his disciples when they little think of it : But, it is by no means necessary that he be personally present *every where* at the same time ; since God may communicate to him a power of knowing distant events,—which is certainly no greater power than God may communicate to any of his creatures."

PHIL. This remark is a mere quibble ; and therefore unworthy to be used by "A Lover of the Gospel." The "power of knowing distant events," which we readily allow God may communicate to any of his creatures, is a very different thing from the contents of the above-cited promise, and, consequently, is no sufficient reason for what it is designed to prove ; namely, "that it is by no means necessary that Christ be personally present every where at the same time." On the contrary, we must still assert, and think it fully proved, that, If our Lord were not personally present, in different parts of our globe at the

* Gen. xxviii. 15.

† Ib. xxxix. 2.

the same time, he could never with truth or propriety, say to his ministers, *Lo I am with you* ALWAYS; and therefore, the text remains in its full force as a convincing proof of our doctrine.

NEO. I thank you, for those pertinent remarks, and will endeavour, through divine assistance, carefully to treasure them up in my mind.

PHIL. I will, upon this part of the subject, add only another passage, which is taken from the writings of the apostle of the Gentiles. *Christ*, saith that first-rate minister of the New-Testament, *is head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of HIM THAT FILLETH ALL IN ALL* *. Which declaration is exactly similar to that which GOD makes of himself, by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, as matter of encouragement to his people, and of terror to those who are alienated from him. *Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: Do not I FILL HEAVEN AND EARTH* §?

Now, if our blessed Lord were a man only, is it probable that he would ever have used such language as the above? He knew, perfectly well, what descriptions were given of Jehovah, as being expressive of his nature, by all the prophets from Moses down to Malachi; and therefore, had not he himself partook of that self-ex-

* Eph. i. 23.

§ Jer. xxiii. 24.

istent nature, he certainly would never have assumed those God-like descriptions to himself; nor, upon that supposition does it comport with the goodness of God, to suffer them to be transmitted to us in the volume of his will.

NEO. *That, I think, is clear and evident. For, a Being of infinite goodness would not, surely, on the supposition which you have mentioned, permit those declarations to stand upon record, in that glorious book, which he himself has given to be a lamp to our feet, and a light unto our paths*.*

PHIL. No. The great Jehovah, *whose name is JEALOUS§*, and who will not, on any consideration, *give his matchless glory to another †*, would never surely diminish his own essential dignity, by ascribing his glorious perfections to a finite, created nature.

On the whole, then, the sum of the preceding argument is this. Those attributes or perfections, which are peculiarly divine, and absolutely incommunicable, are, in the inspired writings, plainly and frequently applied to Christ; so that he must either be truly and properly God, equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, or the Bible must be exploded as a book pregnant with blasphemy, and big with absurdity.

You

* Psal, cxix, 105. § Exod, xxxiv, 14. † Is, xlii, 8.

You see, then, that, in almost numberless passages of the divine word, the essential characters of JEHOVAH; those characters which are absolutely and unalienably his own, are nevertheless, with equal perspicuity, affirmed of the Lord Jesus Christ. Which evidence is, I think, so resistless, that we may say of those who oppose it, as our Lord said of the Jews, *They would not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead* *.

NEO. The evidence to me appears remarkably striking, and my cold affections are greatly warmed with the contemplation of it.—Oh! the astonishing *grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich* §. Rich in grace here, rich in glory hereafter.

What heart of stone but glows at thoughts like
[these!]

YOUNG.

DIALOGUE VI.

PHIL. **I**N our preceding conversation, Neophytus, I mentioned the *works* of Christ, as so many evidences of his omnipotence, and consequently of his Deity. We will now, if you please, proceed to a more particular, and minute consideration of them.

NEO. Nothing can be more agreeable to me than what you now propose. For, to *talk of all his wondrous works* *, and *of the glorious honour of his Majesty* †, is, to me, a most delightful and refreshing theme.

PHIL. We will begin, then, with the work of *creation*; or the giving of existence to every creature. Now, the apostle lays it down as an axiom, or self-evident proposition, That *he who built all things is God* †. And, indeed, the great Jehovah claims this as his sole prerogative. He speaks of it in the most majestic manner, and as being peculiar to Himself. *I am the Lord that*

* Psal. cv. 2. Ib. cxlv. 5. † Heb. iii. 4.

Dial. VI. PERFORMED BY CHRIST. 105

that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth BY MYSELF *.

The Lord Jesus Christ, however, is, in many parts of the sacred oracles, clearly described as the great and original Creator of all things. The beloved disciple John, in the very entrance into his gospel, has these remarkable words. *In the beginning was the Word.—and the Word was God.* ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM; and without him was not any thing made that was made†. Nothing, I think, can possibly be more explicit than this passage, to prove the omnipotency of our blessed Lord?

NEO. It seems, indeed, remarkably clear, and directly to the point in hand.

PHIL. Yes; its evidence is so forcible, and so obvious to the lowest capacity, that, while the scriptures are of any weight or importance, it will sufficiently prove that our only Mediator and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, was also the great, glorious, and Almighty Creator.

The apostle Paul, indeed, enlarges upon the declaration of John, and particularly enumerates what we are to understand by the *all things* which were made by our Lord. *By him, says that chosen vessel, were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities,*

* Is. xli. 24. † Joh. i. 1—4.

principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him *.

NEO. "In that passage," I am told, "we have a view given us of the great and happy change that was made in the world by the gospel; for, by *creation*, we are to understand *the new creation*, or *renovation*, in which sense, the same word is used by the apostle, when he says, *We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works* †."

PHIL. The evasion is extremely weak, and will not bear a strict and impartial examination. The proof which is produced, that by "creation in the text we are to understand the new creation," namely, "that the same word is used, in that sense, by the apostle elsewhere," is by no means sufficient in so important, and interesting an affair. For, though we allow that the word creation, as used in the sacred scriptures, is sometimes expressive of the renovation of the mind; yet, that it must have the same signification in the passage which we are considering, is not, surely, a necessary consequence from these premises.

Indeed, *that* sense of the words stands so plainly confuted from the face of the text, that the very reading of them is, I should think, abundantly sufficient totally to overthrow it. For, the creation of which Paul speaks, in the passage

* Col. i. 16. † Eph. ii. 10.

sage above mentioned, certainly extends to every species of beings ; rational or irrational, visible or invisible, in heaven above, or in the earth beneath.

I would ask then, How the angels, who undoubtedly are included in *things that are in heaven*, could possibly be the subjects of a new creation ? Since they never divested themselves of their primitive integrity, but have hitherto kept their first estate*, they could not be reinvested with that which they never lost.

Besides, what shall we say of the fallen angels ? They are called *principalities* and *powers* †, and are unquestionably included in the apostle's list ; but how can *they* be ranked among new-creatures ? The most obstinate unbelievers, likewise, are among the *things on earth*, but they, so far from being made new creatures, shall be punished with *everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*. §

So that, if language can convey any meaning, if the book of God be not, like those of the mystic divines, perfect jargon, we must understand the words in the most literal sense ; and, according to that construction, the Deity of our Lord is demonstrably proved from them.

NEO. There is not, I clearly perceive, the least foundation, for supposing the apostle to refer to a new creation, nor will it, by any means comport with the expressions in the text ; and therefore

* Jude vi.

† Eph. vi. 12.

§ 2 Thes. i. 9.

therefore will never, I believe, be received by the impartial reader.

PHIL. I will, however, just mention another scripture in proof of this argument, and then leave it entirely to your future reflections. The passage which I have in view is this; *Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are THE WORKS OF THINE HANDS* *. We have already shewn, and I hope satisfactorily, that the words are spoken immediately of Jesus †; and, if that be granted, that he is the all-glorious Creator is doubtless self-evident.

Upon the whole; since the sacred scriptures uniformly attribute the work of creation to God; since to be possessed of creative power is the peculiar prerogative of Jehovah; and seeing that the very same power is clearly ascribed to our Lord, he must, certainly, be God by nature.

NEO. So far, I think, is clear; and I cannot but rejoice in the striking evidence, which the scripture exhibits, of the absolute and extensive power of our blessed Lord.

PHIL. It is, indeed, a sufficient ground of joy; and the rather, since, as he is the Creator of all things, so he is their continual PRESERVER too: as *he is before all things, so BY HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST* §. Every creature is continually and wholly dependent on him, and

* Heb. i. 10. † See Page the 84. § Col. i. 17.

and observes the laws and orders which he, as the Supreme Governour, hath appointed. So that, were he to withdraw his all-supporting arm, the whole system of the universe, how harmonious and beautiful soever, would immediately run into confusion, and fall back into its original nothing.

Further to shew that Christ is the Preserver of the universe, the same inspired writer affirms that, *He upholdeth all things by the word of his power* *. The whole creation rests entirely upon his all-powerful arm; and could no more continue independent of his support, than it could at first have been the cause of its own existence.

Do you think it is at all probable then, that such things would ever have been affirmed of a *created* nature?

NEQ. I apprehend not. Nay, such an affirmation would, in my opinion, be grossly absurd; and therefore I think it not *possible* that the inspired writers should ever be guilty of it.

PHIL. True: It would be inconsistent, absolutely inconsistent with their divinely attested, and dignified character. But the doctrine in hand has no need to be rested upon a *few* scrip-

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tures

* Heb. i. 3. Upon this striking passage I would observe that, It is not the word *λογος* *Logos* which is used, but *εἶπεν* *reina*; perhaps to show that the Son of God upholds the whole creation by a mere word of his mouth; acting in the same all-powerful and divine manner as the Father, which proves his equality and sameness of nature.

tures only ; the whole book of God bears testimony to it. His opening the blind eyes, unstopping the deaf ears, unloosing the stammering tongue, and healing the most inveterate and long-contracted diseases, which was the constant employment of the Redeemer, and which is so fully represented to us in the Bible, is a sufficient, and an infallible proof of his Godhead ; especially when we consider that he did them in his own name.

Those instances of his power, however, together with his absolute authority over the most ungovernable elements, his ejecting devils from their long-accustomed habitations, and his raising the sheeted dead to life again, I shall entirely pass over without enlargement. But there are some particular acts attributed to our Lord, which undoubtedly are expressive of a Divine Character, and clearly mark his proper Godhead, and which, therefore, I shall briefly illustrate to you. Those instances of almighty power, and divine goodness, which I have in view, are, the pardoning of sin ; the giving of eternal life to his people ; the preserving of them from all their spiritual enemies, and the amazing process of the last day.

NEO. Noble acts indeed ! The very mentioning of them enlivens my too much dejected spirits, and fills my breast with a sense of the warmest gratitude.

PHIL.

Dial. VI. PERFORMED BY CHRIST. 111

PHIL. To pardon sin is spoken of by Jehovah himself, as an act peculiarly his own. *I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins**. Yet our blessed Lord, in the days of his flesh, said to an emaciated paralytick, *Son, be of good cheer, THY SINS BE FORGIVEN THEE†*. And when certain of the scribes, who heard the God-like expression, said, *This man blasphemeth*; he replied, *Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee? or to say, Arise and walk?*

However, to convince them fully that *the son of man* had POWER ON EARTH to forgive sins, he said to the heart-affecting object before him, *Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house*. And this power was frequently exercised. The instances in which it was manifested, often occurred. Indeed, it extends to all believers; for, *a master in Israel* urges it, as the strongest motive, to enforce the amiable disposition of forgiveness, on all who have partook of the invaluable blessing. *Forgiving one another,——even as CHRIST FORGAVE YOU, so also do ye§*.

Now, if to pardon sin, in the most proper sense of the expression, be the sole prerogative of *the God who is above*||, which I suppose none will deny; and if our Lord assumed and exercised this power, even in his state of humiliation,

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which

* If. xliii. 25.

† Matt. ix. 2—7.

§ Col. iii. 13.

|| Job xxxi. 28.

which the scriptures abundantly testify ; then either his proper Divinity must be allowed, or his mission from God be entirely exploded.

NEO. How pleasing the consideration, to the guilt-tormented mind, that our Saviour can say, whenever he pleases, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee!* The phrase is, indeed, God-like ; and, I think, would never have been used by him, had he not been truly and properly Divine.

PHIL. It certainly would not ; since the declaration, if made by any created being, as arising from a power inherent in himself, would be so daring an assumption of the unalienable prerogatives of Jehovah, as might be justly deemed an “impious robbery” indeed !

However, in order to confirm and strengthen this, permit me to add further, that the great *Apostle and High Priest of our profession* *, gives ETERNAL LIFE to his people. And to give life, a *divine, eternal* life, is, undoubtedly, the work of God solely. The work of him alone, who faith and it is done, who commandeth and it stands fast. For nothing, you know, can possibly give to another what it has not in itself. And as every created being, how exalted and glorious soever, is entirely dependent on the great Creator, even for its continuation in existence, so it can never possibly communicate an eternal life to another.

Besides,

* Heb. iii. 1.

Dial. VI. PERFORMED BY CHRIST. 113

Besides, there is not a single expression in the whole bible, where this important work is made mention of, but clearly conveys the idea of a divine power being exerted in the effecting of it. The several terms *regeneration*, *creation*, *resurrection*, and the like, which are used to describe it to us, all imply the exertion of an omnipotent arm. To talk, therefore, of a mere man doing this, is, I think, to speak in the softest terms, absurd, and will always be contradicted by common sense. A creature of a day give eternal life ! A finite existence confer a perpetuity of bliss ! It can never be !

NEO. Is the scripture express in regard of Christ's giving eternal life ?

PHIL. As explicit as possible. The great and good Shepherd himself, in different places, speaks fully and directly to the point. *My sheep* says he, *hear my voice,——and I GIVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE* *. And again he declares ; *As the Father raiseth the dead and quickneth them, even so THE SON QUICKNETH WHOM HE WILL* †. And, what I think will put the matter beyond all doubt, with every impartial, scripture-adherent person, is our Lord's peremptory and glorious assertion to Martha, relative to the raising of her much-loved brother. *I am the RESURRECTION and the LIFE ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ;*

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* John x. 26. † John v. 21.

live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me shall never die *.

Now, can any expressions be stronger than these, especially this last of them? Is it probable, is it even possible, that, had Jesus been a man *only*, though endued with ever so extraordinary powers, he would have expressed himself in so majestic and divine a manner? Is it likely or credible, upon the above supposition, that he would ever have called himself the *resurrection* and the *life*? Do any of the prophets or apostles, by whom God revealed his will to mankind, speak in such exalted strains? Quite the reverse. They were extremely cautious, upon all occasions, lest they should even be thought to assume any power or glory to themselves. *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk* †, was their language, when they were about to heal the nerveless cripple; and we have reason to believe it was the same, upon every like occasion.

So that, we must conclude from these declarations of our Lord, and others of a similar nature, that he is really possessed of a divine, and almighty power. The *servants* of Christ, in all ages, like faithful guides, have *showed unto us the way of salvation* §; but he, like a king upon the throne, confers the *invaluable blessing* *itself*.

NEO.

* John xi, 25—26.

† Acts iii, 6.

§ Acts xvi, 17.

Dial. VI. PERFORMED BY CHRIST. 115

NEO. The unspeakably precious gift of eternal life, seems, indeed, far beyond the power of a creature to bestow. It must certainly, indicate the giver to be properly Divine. Such views of our Lord are peculiarly endearing, and make him indeed appear to be *the chief among ten thousand, yea, altogether lovely* *.

PHIL. Another act of Deity, which our Saviour performs, and is clearly expressive of a Divine Character, is, His preserving his people, from all the deep-laid, and destructive schemes of their most inveterate foes.

Hear his own most gracious declaration. *I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall NEVER PERISH, NEITHER SHALL ANY PLUCK THEM OUT OF MY HAND* †. Now whoever reflects upon the power and malice of the Christian's enemies; whoever considers that he *wrestles not against FLESH AND BLOOD only, but also against PRINCIPALITIES and POWERS, the RULERS OF THE DARKNESS of this world, and against SPIRITUAL WICKEDNESS in high places* ‡; whoever understands properly, the combined power of the world, the flesh and the devil, will, I should think, readily grant, that a Divine arm is necessary, absolutely necessary to *preserve us from falling* §.

NEO. I have often, when reflecting on the power of my spiritual enemies, and their seven-fold

* Song. v. 16. † John x. 28. ‡ Eph. vi. 12. § Jude xxiv.

fold rage and malice, been ready to say with David, *I shall one day perish by the hand* * of those merciless foes !

PHIL. Were it not that the *grace* of our Lord is sufficient for us, and his *strength* made perfect in weakness ||, we should certainly fall as a prey into their hands. For the workings of *sin* that dwelleth in us † ; the lustings of the *flesh* against the Spirit § ; the powerful allurements of the world ‡ ; and the subtle devices of our adversary the devil (a) ; have power quickly to stifle and extinguish grace, if it were not maintained by that all-powerful blast which first inbreathed it. For, you may be assured of this, that no less a power is required in the perfecting or completeing of grace, than in the first implanting of it.

The Christian soldier, therefore, if he would not be vanquished by his spiritual enemies, must, like David when he fought with the proud, and gigantic Philistine, go to the attack *in the name of the Lord of hosts* (b), who is the *Captain of our salvation* (c). And who ever doth so, though in himself he be feeble as the crawling worm (d), and helpless as the new-born babe (e), yet *through Christ strengthening him* (f), he shall certainly obtain the conquest. Thousands, and ten thousands have, *by the blood of the lamb, and the word* of

* 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. || 2 Cor. xii. 9. † Rom. vii. 20.
 § Gal. v. 17. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 10. (a) 2 Cor. ii. 11.
 (b) 1 Sam. xvii. 45. (c) Heb. ii. 10. (d) Isa. xli. 14.
 (e) 1 Pet. ii. 2. (f) Phil. iv. 13.

Dial. VI. PERFORMED BY CHRIST. 117

of their testimony *, overcome those powerful and malevolent foes. Nay, they *have been MORE than conquerors through him that loved them* †.

On the whole, to subdue the power of sin in the heart, to counteract the numberless devices of Satan, to preserve us from the snares and allurements of the world, and to *present us faultless §, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing* ||, before the presence of his glory, are acts which, certainly, none but Deity can perform. And, therefore, since these almighty works are affirmed of our Lord, his proper Divinity is, I should think, unquestionable.

NEO. Ever since I had the least spiritual discernment given to me, I have always thought that the Deity of our Saviour was a doctrine of great importance; but I never, till now, saw it in so clear and striking a light. If he were not possessed of a Divine power, how justly pitiable, nay, how truly deplorable, is the situation of all his earth-dwelling disciples!

But when we consider that his arm is omnipotent; when we reflect that he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and especially when we have a well-grounded hope of our relation to him, or interest in him, methinks we may adopt the apostle's triumphant language, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ* ‡? And oh!

* Rev. xii. 11. † Rom. viii. 32. § Jude xxv.

|| Eph. v. 27. ‡ Rom. viii. 37.

oh ! how reviving, how consolatory the thought, that, if we are his, *neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be ABLE to separate us from the love of God* *.

PHIL. To hear you express yourself in so pleasing and heart-feeling a manner, affords a considerable refreshment to my mind ; and I am *comforted together with you* ||.—But we will pass on to consider another of the glorious works of our blessed Lord, namely, the awful process of the last day.

The *final judgment* of mankind, as well as their first being brought into existence, is, in the scriptures, ascribed to God. *God is judge himself* †. And, indeed, to suppose that any being, who is not possessed of infinite perfection, is capable of performing so stupendous a work, is, in my opinion, very absurd. For, to raise the sleeping nations from their earthly or watery tombs ; to place them all before the judgment seat ; to manifest the secret thoughts of this vast assembly ; to discover the latent wickedness of ungodly, disobedient sinners, and to proclaim and reward the secret workings of piety in those, who loved God, and worshipped him in spirit and in truth, are acts which undoubtedly require an *omniscient* eye, and an *all-powerful* arm.

But,

* Ver. xxxviii. || Ib. i. 12. † Psal. l. 6.

Dial. VI. PERFORMED BY CHRIST. 119

But, though no less glorious a person than one who is Divine, could possibly be qualified for this important transaction, yet the scriptures particularly attribute it to the Lord Jesus Christ. Nay, he himself speaks of it, in such a manner, as evidently proclaims his power and Godhead. *When the Son of man, he says, shall come in his glory,——before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. And THESE shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal* *.

NEO. I have often read the account with a mixture of joy and trembling. Joy, when I reflect that my Saviour, whose heart is love, is the appointed Judge. Trembling, when I think upon the exact scrutiny of that most awful and tremendous day.

PHIL. The inquiry will, indeed, be strict; for, he will *bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil* ||, and will render to every man according to his deeds†. But, the truly righteous, who have cordially received that righteousness which is revealed in the gospel from *faith to faith* ||, and have *abode in Christ* by the exercise of faith, hope,

* Matt. xxv. 31. to the end. || Eccles. xii. 14.

† Rom. ii. 6. ‡ Ib. i. 17,

hope, and love, shall, when he appears, *have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming* *.

And whenever this great and long-expected day arrives; when *the LORD HIMSELF shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel and the trump of God* §, his divine and uncreated glories will, I doubt not, beam forth, in the most conspicuous manner, to the amazement of gospel-despising sinners, and the inexpressible joy of real saints. His *true* character will then indeed be manifested, and *every eye shall see him* †. But

————— *Oh! how unlike*

The babe at Bethle'm! how unlike the man

That groaned on Calvary!—Yet he it is;

That man of sorrows! O how chang'd! what pomp!

In grandeur terrible all heaven descends!

And gods, ambitious, triumph in his train.

YOUNG.

Amazing period! The day now breaks which never more shall close. Our God appears in his highest grandeur, and nature, universal nature, is convulsed at his approach. Where! Oh! where shall the guilty fly for shelter? To which of the saints will they turn? Alas! their cries are vain. The Judge is now inexorable. The sentence irreversible. But may you, and I, build our eternal hopes upon that *foundation which God himself has laid in Zion* ||. Then, though

* 1 John ii. 28. § 1 Thes. iv. 16. † Rev. i. 7.

|| Isa. xxviii. 16.

Dial. VI. PERFORMED BY CHRIST. 121

though ruin drive her ploughshare o'er creation,
though rocks eternal pour their melted brass,
nay, though stars and suns are swept aside, yet
we shall stand entirely undismayed. Yes, we
may then behold the most horrible convulsions
of expiring nature, with the greatest and most
undisturbed composure; and, to render our fel-
licity absolutely complete, we shall hear the
heart-reviving sentence, *Come ye blessed of my Fa-
ther, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the
foundation of the world* *.

Thus I have endeavoured to lay before you
a brief specimen of the *works* of our Lord Jesus
Christ; and, if these most glorious acts were
really performed by him, either he is a Divine
Person, and truly God, or otherwise there is no
certain distinction between a created and an un-
created nature; since they are the very identical
characters by which the Supreme Being hath
manifested his divine and unrivalled glory un-
to us.

NEO. They seem, indeed, to be sufficiently
distinctive of the Divine Character of Jesus,
and will, I hope, in future, be the subject of my
frequent meditations. Encouraged by these
most glorious discoveries of his nature, I would
*commit the keeping of my soul to him in well doing,
as unto a faithful Creator* †; not in the least doubt-
ing, but that he who hath delivered my soul
from death, will also preserve my feet from
falling ‡.

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* Matt. xxv. 34.

† 1 Pet. iv. 19.

‡ Psal. lvi. 13.

DIALOGUE VII.

PHIL. **I** HAVE just been reading the grand and majestic description of our Lord, which is given by the beloved disciple, in the beginning of his Revelation, and as it has struck my own mind in a peculiar manner, you will give me leave briefly to repeat it to you.

NEO. Certainly; and I shall attend to it with pleasure.

PHIL. *I saw, says that highly-favoured person, one like unto the Son of man, cloathed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breast with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire. His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp*

sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun when he shineth in his strength.—And he said unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

NEO. I should be glad, if, after having thus drawn the admirable portrait of Jesus, from the volume of inspiration, you would farther indulge me with your own reflections upon it.

PHIL. My thoughts, upon reading the passage this morning, were such as these.—How amazingly resplendent and majestic the appearance! Who can view it, though but with the eye of faith, and through the telescope of the word, and not be struck with the deepest reverence, and most humble admiration! Every, even the minutest circumstance, seems designed to convey some important lesson for our spiritual instruction in *the mysteries of the kingdom of God*†. Surely none can attentively consider this glorious portrait, which, in many instances, is so exactly similar to that of THE ANTI-ENT OF DAYS †, without perceiving and admiring the majestic features of Deity, therein so conspicuously displayed! And as the lineaments are of so divine a nature, the intention of their being thus publicly exhibited, is, That our minds may be impressed with a proper ve-

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neration

* Rev. i. 12.—19. † Matt. xiii. 17. † Dan. vii. 9, 10.

neration and esteem for that august and amiable character; and consequently, that beholding him in this point of view, we may be induced to pay him our most humble and devout adoration.

These reflections, and others nearly similar to them, arose spontaneously in my mind, upon perusing the above-mentioned passage.

NEO. But I am told, that giving divine honours to Jesus Christ, “is the *idolatrous worship of a creature*, and an antichristian corruption of the gospel.” As, therefore, to be well acquainted with the proper object of worship is doubtless a point of great importance; as it appears to me to enter into the very *essentials* of christianity, I could wish, as we have now a convenient opportunity, that you would a little enlarge upon so interesting a subject, that I may gain a more clear and distinct idea concerning it.

PHIL. That I will do with the greatest pleasure; and the rather, since the *honours* which are required to be given to our Lord, and which have been and still are paid to him, both on earth and in heaven, certainly evidence that he is truly GOD. For, the first and great commandment, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me* *, certainly excludes every being from having religious worship given to it, but the great JEHOVAH, the ever-blessed Three, the one living

* Exod. xx. 3.

living and true God. For, the plain meaning of the above precept is, 'Thou shalt have no other object of worship upon which thou shalt place a religious dependence, or to which thou shalt pay religious honours.'

Divine worship, then, is the sole prerogative of HIM, in whom *we live, move, and have our being* *. Hence the Jewish prophet declares, *The LORD our God is one LORD* §; and adds, *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name* †. And a greater than Moses, even our Saviour himself, hath said, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and HIM ONLY shalt thou serve* ‡. To which declarations I will add that of the *angel*, mentioned in the

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book

* Acts xviii. 28. § Deut. vi. 4. This text is certainly expressive both of the Divine Unity, and Plurality. For, as יהוה *Jeve, Jehovah, or Lord*, indicates the necessary existence of the Divine Essence, so אלהים *Aleim*, being plural, must express a distinction in that Essence; such a distinction as that *personal* characters may be borne by them, and *personal* actions performed by them. Aleim, therefore, conveying the idea of plurality to Jews, it is with great propriety that Moses informs them that *these* are one Jehovah. And without the passage be understood in this point of view, the sacred writer is certainly guilty of gross tautology, and, in fact, declares no more than That *one* is *one*; or That the Divine Being is the Divine Being; a declaration altogether unworthy of an inspired writer. But taking the word *Aleim* in the above sense, as expressing a plurality, the text is exceedingly well adapted to correct any erroneous notions which they might have formed, as though it were inconsistent with the Divine Unity; which the accurate historian declares is not the case, but on the contrary asserts, Our Aleim is one Jehovah. § Verse 13. † Matt. iv. 10.

book of the *revelation*, who, when John *fell at his feet to worship him*, absolutely refused to receive even so much as the outward act of adoration; and gave this reason for it, *I am thy fellow-servant*—WORSHIP GOD*. So that, whatsoever is not truly GOD *by nature*; whatever is not absolutely Supreme, and possessed of infinite, uncreated, or underivative perfections, cannot, without a flagrant breach of the above-cited precepts, have divine, or religious honours attributed to it.

If, then, it can be proved, that such honours are commanded to be given to JESUS, and also that they have in all ages been actually paid to him, by the wisest and best of men, it will, certainly, be a strong additional evidence of his true and proper Divinity. For, were he a *creature* only, though of the highest rank, the worship of him would be absolutely inconsistent with the leading and fundamental principle, both of the law and gospel.

NEO. What scriptural authority have you, for the worshipping of the Lord Jesus Christ.

PHIL. If we consult the book of God upon this subject, as we should upon every thing relating to divine truths, we shall find precepts and examples enow, not only to *countenance*, but fully and clearly to *establish*, the much-despised, and by many, exploded practice.

The

* Rev. xix. 10.

The Holy Ghost, speaking of the King of Zion, that is, the promised Messiah, by the mouth of his servant David, saith, *He is thy LORD, and worship thou HIM* *. And the apostle Paul, who was doubtless actuated by the same unerring Spirit, speaks exactly to the same purpose, and in nearly the same words too. *When he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM* †. Now what precepts can possibly be more explicit, or forcible than these? They are no less clear and express, than the preceding ones which we have already noticed; and therefore certainly require our implicit and unreserved obedience. So that, we do not, you see, maintain that religious worship is to be given to Christ, upon the foundation of synods and councils, but from the plain light of divine revelation. God himself has told us so in the most obvious declarations.

NEO. But it is said, that, “the Greek word, which, in the last-mentioned passage, is rendered *worship*, is frequently used to express a very high degree of respect; but such as may be lawfully paid to men of a proper character and rank,—as when a servant, in one of our Saviour’s parables, is said to have fallen down and *worshipped his master*, saying, *Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all*; where certainly *divine worship* could not be meant.”

PHIL.

* Psal. xlv, 11.

† Heb. i, 6.

PHIL. Very true. But, allowing the full force of the objection, as you have now stated it; granting that the word rendered *worship*, in the above and some other texts, is used "to express a high degree of respect only," what is the inference which is drawn from it? That therefore it *never* signifies *divine*, or *religious* honours? Surely no one who "makes use of the rational faculties which God has given him," will ever draw such an inference as this, from these premises, for it is certainly by no means contained in them.

The truth is, 'there are very few words in our own, or perhaps in any other language, which do not admit of more senses than one; yet this does by no means hinder, but that the particular sense of a word may be so determined by its connexion with other words in the same sentence, that it cannot, possibly, in that connexion, admit of more than one signification.'

The word *worship*, for instance, in the parable of our Saviour which you have mentioned; is certainly designed to express no more than "a very high degree of respect," such as may be lawfully paid to men of a proper character and rank, and will be taken in that light by every honest, and impartial reader. But then, on the other hand, the same word as used by our Lord, when he said to the Samaritan woman, *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must*

WORSHIP *in spirit and in truth**, does as certainly signify *divine worship*, or *religious adoration*, in the most proper sense of the phrase, the connexion in which it stands, having God for its object, not admitting of any inferior or subordinate honours. So that, every thing which is spoken of in the scriptures, relating to the worship of the blessed Jesus, must be determined by the scope of the passages where it occurs, compared with parallel places in those sacred writings.

NEO. The objection, I see, is of no force at all; since, though the word *worship* does sometimes signify those honours which may be lawfully paid to men, yet it expresses, likewise, those divine honours which are due only to God, and which we are absolutely prohibited from giving to any merely created being.

PHIL. In order to show its absolute invalidity more clearly, I would observe that, in the above-cited texts, the DIVINE NATURE of Christ is urged, as the primary ground, or foundation of our worship of him; so that we have exactly the same reason to worship him as the Father. The former passage says, *He is thy LORD*, therefore *worship* thou him. The latter, which, as well as the former, is almost a literal quotation from *the psalmist*, must be understood to mean the same thing. For, the
leading

* John iv. 24.

leading design of the psalm, it is obvious, is to shew the nature and incomprehensibility of the divine administration. It begins with these soul-reviving words, *The LORD reigneth* *;—and afterwards it is added, the Lord *of the whole earth*. Then the sacred writer goes on to assert the equity and glory of his moral government. *The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people shall see his glory*. Then follows an awful threatening, denounced against those, who give that worship which is due to GOD alone, to any other being. *Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols*. After this most solemn denunciation, the divine command is given, *Worship HIM all ye gods*; that is, the illustrious object of whom he had been speaking, namely, the Lord of the whole earth; whom the apostle declares, in an immediate reference to these words of the psalmist, is the LORD JESUS CHRIST. The Redeemer, indeed, must be the subject spoken of in the psalm, otherwise it could not be true that such a thing was *said* of him, as *Worship him all ye gods*; and therefore we both may and must fetch the *sense* from that psalm, out of which the apostle fetches the words.

Now, from these passages of scripture, the two following things, I think, are exceedingly obvious, and beyond dispute; to wit, That the giving of religious honours to any *being* who is not absolutely

* Psal. 97, throughout.

absolutely Supreme, is, the scripture being judge, grofs idolatry; and, That it is the GOD-HEAD, or DIVINE NATURE of our Saviour, which alone entitles him to these religious adorations.

NEO. Has our Lord himself said any thing upon this subject? Or did he suffer himself to be worshipped in the days of his flesh.

PHIL. Yes; he both spoke in the most explicit terms relative to it, and he was worshipped in a religious manner, during his abode in our world. As to the former, in a remarkable discourse of his, delivered, as should seem, before the Jewish sanhedrim, he tells them that *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement to the Son, that ALL MEN SHOULD HONOUR THE SON, EVEN AS THEY HONOUR THE FATHER.* And adds, *He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent him* *.

Now these words plainly declare, that what worship soever is due to the Father; what divine honours soever are to be given to him; the very same worship and honours are to be given to our Lord Jesus Christ. And further, that whoever witholds that worship, or these honours from the Son, if our Lord spoke the truth, witholds them also equally from the Father. Which declaration could never, surely, be made upon any

* Joh. v. 23.

132 DIVINE WORSHIP Dial. VII.

any other foundation than that of his absolute and perfect equality with the Father.

NEO. So then, you apprehend that the very same identical acts of worship, are to be given to the Son as to the Father.

PHIL. I do. And, if I mistake not, the above-mentioned declaration of our Saviour is a plain and demonstrative proof of it.

NEO. Some persons, however, think that the text only means, that we should honour him "*as well as the Father.*"

PHIL. Such an illustration of the text leaves it quite vague and indeterminate ; so that an honest enquirer would be at a loss to fix its precise meaning ; for, if he must not honour the Son equally with the Father, he may be either a *rebel* by giving too little, or an *idolater* by giving too much. It would be well if the persons you refer to, would precisely fix the degree of honour we ought to give to the Redeemer, that we may know the rule we have to act by ; and likewise tell us whether the honour we are to give the Son "*as well as*" the Father, be *religious* honour, or only such "*respect as is due to men* of proper character and rank."

That the expression *even as* does, however, in the passage we are now considering, signify an *equality*, is, I think, sufficiently evident, both from the concurrent testimony of other scriptures,

tures, and the reason assigned in the preceding context. Till the arguments already used upon this subject, are overturned, that the very *same* worship is to be given to the Son as the Father, is a position I must assert.—And the reason assigned for this, in the preceding context, is, in my opinion, exceedingly forcible. *The FATHER judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgement to the SON: THAT all men should honour the SON even as they honour the Father.*

The reason, then, why the Son is to be thus honoured, is, his being the sovereign, and universal judge; and, as we have already shown*, that this glorious work is expressive of a Divine Character, so it must certainly require *Divine* honours. And, though the power of judging the world is said to be *committed* to him, yet that does by no means prove that the right of judgement did not originally belong to him, but only, that the sole exercise of it being in his hands, is the result of a voluntary dispensation. However, if possible, further to corroborate it, let us consider some instances of persons who, during the abode of Christ upon earth, paid religious adorations to him, together with his behaviour towards them at those times.

NEO. That is a subject I want to be informed about, and therefore I shall attend to it with much pleasure.

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PHIL.

PHIL. The apostle John, in his account of the works and discourses of his Master, tells us, that Jesus having healed a man who had been *blind from his birth*, and hearing that, for confessing the fact to require an omnipotent arm, they had *cast him out of the synagogue*, he sought him, *and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?* To which the man replied, *Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?* And Jesus said unto him, *Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.* And he said, *Lord, I believe.* And HE WORSHIPPED HIM *.

Now this act of worship, you see, was accompanied with a glorious confession of faith in the object, as the SON of GOD, the promised Messiah; and therefore must, I should think, be considered as something more than what may, in any instance, “be paid to *men*, though of ever so high a character and rank.”

NEO. It seems, indeed, to convey an idea of the highest kind of worship, in which suitable affections and graces were exercised, and particularly a fervent love to the glorious and benevolent object of his address. But are there any similar instances to this?

PHIL. Yes; at another time the apostles said unto their Master, *Lord, increase our faith* †. Which expression is certainly a direct address to

* John ix. 31—39, † Luke xvii. 5.

to our Saviour, for a spiritual favour ; namely, an exciting and promoting the principle of faith which was implanted in their hearts, and consequently is expressive of their belief that he was able to perform this. Other instances, nearly parallel to those which we have already mentioned, might, were it necessary, easily be produced. But, *that*, I should think, is entirely needless ; the above-mentioned ones being so exceedingly clear, and directly to the point in hand.

Now, if our Lord had not, on account of his Divine Character, been properly entitled to such worship, he would undoubtedly have rejected it, as being totally inconsistent with his own character, and highly derogatory from the glory of God ; seeing that, the receiving of it, upon the above supposition, would have been a bold usurpation of the prerogatives of Deity. But, as we have not the least intimation, that any one of those persons who worshipped our Lord in the days of his flesh, was ever discountenanced or reproved for mistaking the object of his worship, we may justly conclude that they were right in what they did, and acted in a perfect agreement with the command of God. And, if this be granted, the proper DIVINITY of Christ is, I should think, absolutely undeniable.

NEO. If our Saviour were “ only a man, in all respects like ourselves,” his receiving divine

worship in the manner which has been pointed out, is not possible I think to be accounted for, in a consistency with his character as a messenger from heaven.

PHIL. Certainly it is not; and if with the behaviour of our Lord, in the above-mentioned instances, we compare the conduct of the apostles in similar circumstances, 'the contrast throws great light upon this matter *.' They, whenever any thing which had the least appearance of religious worship was offered to them, immediately rejected it with the greatest concern and abhorrence, as being by no means due to them, but the sole prerogative of the Supreme Being.

A striking instance to this purpose we have exhibited in the behaviour of Paul and Barnabas. These two zealous preachers of the gospel, having healed a nerveless paralytic at Lystra, were viewed in so divine a light by the people there, that *they would needs have done SACRIFICE* unto them. But, no sooner had the apostles heard of this, than, being extremely jealous for the honour of their Master, and conscious of their absolute unworthiness to receive such honours, *they rent their cloaths, and ran in among*
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* See a valuable little tract, entitled "*A short defence of the doctrine of the DIVINITY of CHRIST*;" which I have read with much pleasure, and from which I have taken this, and a few other hints, relative to that interesting and important subject.

the people, crying out—Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are MEN of like passions with you *. So that, you see, it was not merely “a very high degree of respect, such as may be lawfully paid to men of a proper character and rank” which these noble ambassadours rejected, but such honours as were not due to *men*.

NEO. The conduct of the apostles, in the instance which you have mentioned, does, indeed, throw a great light upon the subject; and, I think, evidently shews, That if our Lord were not truly and properly Divine, he was much inferior even to his own disciples, both as to the integrity of his own character, and in his regard for the glory of God.

PHIL. Yes; if our blessed Saviour were *merely* a man, notwithstanding “the great power with which he was invested on earth, or the authority to which he is exalted now that he is in heaven,” yet his conduct in the above-cited examples could never be vindicated from the charge of usurpation, but must certainly be a plain, and unquestionable indication, of a want of integrity and uprightness of character. But as this thought cannot, by any true “*Lover of the Gospel,*” be admitted even a moment, with respect to the *faithful and true Witness* †; so, we must still insist, that, as Christ did not reject the worship which was given to him, nor even

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once

* Acts xiv. 8—19. † Rev. i. 5. and iii. 7.

once rebuke the persons who thus honoured him, he is certainly possessed of absolute Supremacy, and universal Dominion.

NEO. Is there any sufficient proof that our Lord was worshipped by the primitive Christians after his ascension into glory ?

PHIL. Yes; all the proof that a reasonable man can desire. In that most antient, invaluable, and authentic history of the primitive church, which is recorded in the *Acts of the apostles*, we are expressly told, that the worshipping of Christ, or, which is the same thing, *calling upon his name*, in those first and purest days of Christianity, was the distinguishing character of his genuine disciples. But, before we investigate that sacred book, suffer me to mention an instance which occurred, between our Lord's resurrection and ascension.

NEO. Pray what is that ?

PHIL. It is the case of Thomas. Jesus, you know, after he had risen from the grave, continued upon earth *forty days**, before he ascended into glory, and *sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*†. During that space of time he frequently was seen by his disciples. The first time, however, that he appeared to the assembled apostles, Thomas was not with them ; and though they told him that they *had seen the*
Lord,

* Acts i. 3. † Heb. i. 3.

Lord, yet he did not believe them. Nay, he went even further than this; for, he said, *Except I shall see in his hands the prints of the nails,—and thrust my hand into his side, I WILL NOT BELIEVE.*

But, notwithstanding the sinful incredulity of this disciple, the compassionate *Shepherd and Bishop of souls**, who knows how to succour them that are tempted†, made a full, and glorious discovery of himself in the very way that Thomas had desired. The unbelieving disciple, being as it were overcome by so singular an instance of condescension, and having, as should seem, a ray of divine glory darted into his mind, immediately replied, in a way, and probably in a posture, of adoration, *My LORD and my GOD* §!

Now, this declaration is so express an acknowledgement of the proper Deity, and universal dominion of our Saviour, that, if he were not truly possessed of a Divine Nature; if he were not in reality what Thomas declared him to be, that is, LORD and GOD, he certainly would never have permitted the declaration to have passed unnoticed. No; had he been *merely* a man, “in all respects like ourselves,” surely he would at this juncture have expressly declared it. He would undoubtedly have said, as the apostles in the instance above-cited, I myself also am a man; and therefore such honours, Thomas,

* 1 Pet. ii, 25.

† Heb. ii, 18,

§ John xx, 28.

Thomas, are by no means due to me. Or, as the angel in another case, *I am thy fellow servant* — *Worship* GOD.

NEO. The words, indeed, seem plainly to express the sentiments of the speaker, with respect to the Divinity of his Lord, consequently had he been mistaken, it is, I should think, very natural to suppose, that the great Teacher would have immediately corrected his error. They are, however, it is affirmed, only “an abrupt exclamation, and no connected sentence at all, and seem to have proceeded from a conviction, suddenly produced in the apostle’s mind, that he who stood before him was, indeed, his Lord and Master, raised to life by the power of God.”

PHIL. So then, the noble declaration of the apostle, though so plainly expressive of his faith in the GODHEAD of his Saviour, is resolved wholly into his belief of the exertion of a divine power!—Is it possible that any honest, unbiassed reader can be satisfied with such an explication as this? I should think not. Thomas had seen the *power of God* manifested, in the raising of Lazarus from the grave*, and therefore, *that*, considered as independent of Christ, could not be the cause of his present declaration.

The truth is, he was struck with a clear perception of the *omniscience*, and *almighty power* of Jesus,

* John xi. 16.

Jesus, manifested in reproving his unbelieving expression, and in raising himself from the dead, according to his own declaration, *Destroy this temple, pointing at his body, and I will raise it up in three days* *, and therefore he burst out into the exclamation before cited. As to the sentence being “ abrupt,” or “ not at all connected,” the observation is “ a specimen of the merest cavilling,” and is calculated only to amuse the unwary reader. ‘ The words have all the connexion that any exclamation has ; they arise from the event, and clearly express the sentiments of the speaker.’ Besides, if this expression be not considered as an act of worship, Thomas can never, I think, be exculpated, from the detestable charge of taking the name of God in vain.

On the whole, then, we must still insist, that, if there had not been sufficient reason to address our Lord in the above-mentioned manner, he would certainly have sharply reproved the speaker ; but, as not the least hint of that kind appears, we conclude that, he was and is *really* what Thomas acknowledged him to be ; i. e. LORD and GOD.

NEO. The instance, when attentively considered, appears, indeed, remarkably striking ; and, one would think, sufficiently expressive of the character of our Lord.—You will now
go

* John ii. 19.

142 DIVINE WORSHIP Dial. VII.

go on, to consider the practice of the primitive church?

PHIL. At a convenient opportunity; but at present, business calls, and you know to attend to it in its place, is an expressly commanded duty; Farewell.

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DIALOGUE VIII.

PHIL. **T**HE evangelist Luke, in his invaluable history of the apostolic church, tells us that, the worshipping of Christ, or, which is the same thing, *calling on his name*, was, in that golden age of the world, a distinctive character of his true disciples.

NEO. I should be glad if you would recite the passages which you refer to, for I think I cannot immediately recollect them.

PHIL. After the Lord had appeared to Saul in his journey to Damascus, and had convinced him of the extreme danger and sinfulness of his intolerant procedure, he ordered a disciple of his, Ananias, to go and *put his hands on him, that he might receive his sight*. Ananias objected to this, and said, *Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to thy saints*
at

*at Jerusalem ; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all THAT CALL ON THY NAME *.*

In a few days after this, however, Saul, having received his sight, and, what was of far greater consequence, having a clear and immediate *revelation of Christ* given to him †, zealously *preached in the synagogues, that HE is the SON OF GOD §.* But all that heard him were amazed, and said, *Is not this he that destroyed them who CALLED ON THIS NAME IN JERUSALEM ‡!* So that, the first disciples and followers of our Lord, were, you see, clearly distinguished from others, by the religious honours which they gave to the Saviour of the world. They called on his name, as the great Head of the church, for a supply of their various returning wants.

And what is, if possible, still more to our purpose, this very apostle, in one of his letters to a church of Christ, characterizes them exactly in the preceding manner ; and not them only, but also the whole body of Christians, wherever they were dispersed over the face of the world. His words are these : *To them that art sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place CALL UPON THE NAME of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours ||.* Whence it appears to a demonstration, that to worship Jesus, in those first and purest days

* Acts ix. 14. † Gal. i. 16. § Acts ix. 20. ‡ Verse 21.

|| 1 Cor. i. 2.

Dial. VIII. GIVEN TO CHRIST. 145

days of christianity, was, the scripture being judge, the universal practice of all who truly believed in him *.

NEO. So then, you apprehend that to call upon the name of Jesus, or to be a disciple of his, or a saint, or a believer in him, are all expressive of the same thing; and designed to characterize those who are his, from the rest of the world *who lie in wickedness*†.

PHIL. Yes; but, alas! how amazingly is the scene changed in this respect! How is the gold become dim§! What a striking contrast is there, between the *ancient* professors of the gospel, and a considerable part of the *modern* ones! The *former*, being fully persuaded of the GODHEAD of Jesus, addressed themselves immediately to him, for all necessary supplies of grace and strength; the *latter*, considering him as being *merely* a man, seem studiously to avoid even the mentioning of his name, except occasionally, as it were, to save appearances with the people. *Those*, conscious of the superlative dignity of their Lord and Master, paid divine honours to him without the least reserve; but

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these

* MOSHEIM, in his ecclesiastical history, speaking of the rapid progress of the gospel in the first and second centuries, says, 'We are assured by the most unexceptionable testimonies, that CHRIST was worshipped as GOD, almost throughout the whole East, as also among the Germans, Spaniards, Celts, Britons, and many other nations.' See vol. 1. page 120 of the second edition. † 1. Joh. v. 19. § Lament. iv. 1.

these, viewing the Saviour of the world, as nearly, if not wholly, upon a level with themselves, seldom attribute to him any religious honour at all : nay, they explode such a practice as “ *the idolatrous worship of a creature.*”

To exclude the Lord Jesus Christ from any share in religious honours, and to stigmatize the worship of him with the reproachful term of “ *idolatry,*” may, indeed, by some, be deemed *rational*, though it appears to me that the word as thus applied is highly improper ; but it can never, I think, in a consistency with the language of the New-Testament, be called *Christian*, nor the abettors of it be deemed the disciples of Christ. No, such a practice, after the most cool and dispassionate consideration, appears to me totally repugnant to the scripture notion of a believer in Jesus ; and can never comport with that view of his glory, which every true disciple is favoured with*.

NEO. But it is said, that “ the word which is rendered to *call upon*, in the above-cited passages, is far from being appropriated to *invocation*, as peculiar to the Divine Being. It is the same word which is rendered to *appeal to*, as when Paul appealed to Cæsar ; and is used when a person is said to be called by any particular name ; as, Judas, *called* Iscariot, &c. There can be no doubt, therefore,” it is added, “ but that it has the same meaning in the places which
you

* 2 Cor, iii. 18. and 4. 6.

you have quoted." That is, it means to give a name, or points out "all who called themselves *Christians*."

PHIL. The premises we readily allow; but the conclusion drawn from them is by no means either a natural or necessary one; nor has it the least connexion with the preceding proposition, as you will immediately perceive upon the argument being properly stated; and this I shall do as briefly as I can.

'The word usually translated to *call upon*, signifies in one place*, *to be called by a particular name*; in another†, *to appeal to*; and, in a third§, *to address a person*; therefore in some other places‡ it signifies to be called by a particular name.' In what a labyrinth of nonsense does a man involve himself who labours to maintain falsehood by argument! Is such kind of reasoning becoming a candid disputant? Is it fair and ingenuous? Rather, Is it not a gross imposition upon the less discerning reader, and evidently used as a studied evasion, or a fly, subterfuge?

NEO. The consequence I perceive is entirely inconclusive, and has not, as you have observed, any necessary connexion with the above-mentioned premises.—But it is further urged, that "the word is so rendered in the epistle of

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James;

* Luke xxii. 3. † Acts xxv. 21. § Ibid vii. 59.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 2. Acts ix. 14, 21.

James; *Do not they blaspheme the worthy name by which ye are called**? or, as it is more exactly rendered, *which is called*, or imposed, *on you*? that is, by which ye are distinguished. Had it implied *adoration*," they affirm "it would at least have been *which is called upon by you*."

PHIL. True; but what is that to the purpose? We never quote the passage in James as any proof of our doctrine, and therefore the meaning of it cannot possibly in the least affect the state of our argument. All that can be fairly deduced from the observations which you have mentioned, is, That the word rendered *calling upon*, is not *always* "appropriated to invocation as peculiar to the Divine Being," and therefore its meaning must be determined by the scope of the passages where it is used. *Here* then the argument rests. And we are willing, extremely willing, that the texts above cited should be tried in that manner. Let the scope and design of them be duly and impartially attended to, and then let the unbiaſſed reader say, *Whether* he thinks is the most natural, and obvious meaning. Whether the sacred writers meant to convey the idea of *calling upon* a name or person, or of being called *by* one.

However, that the word does, sometimes at least, *necessarily* signify "invocation as peculiar to God," is demonstrably clear from the following passage. *Whoſoever ſhall CALL UPON the*

name

* James ii. 7.

*name of the Lord shall be saved**. Which words, it has already been shown §, are a quotation from the prophecy of Joel, and applied immediately to the Lord Jesus Christ. And the phrase to *call upon*, as there used, must imply the exercise of heavenly graces, or those spiritual actings of the soul, which distinguish the true christian from all other men, since salvation is inseparably connected with it; for many, we have sufficient reason to believe, who have been called *by* the name of Christ, or who have had the appellation *Christian* given to them, will be *found wanting* † in the day of trial.

NEO. It seems, indeed, an obvious truth, from the passages which you have quoted, that the whole Christian church, in the primitive age at least, did give divine, or religious honours to our Saviour, without any hesitation, or fear of idolatry; nay, that this was their distinguishing and well known character.

PHIL. Yes; the glorious, and much-wished-for period was then arrived, which was predicted by the royal prophet, when, speaking of the Messiah's kingdom, under the type of Solomon's, he says, *Prayer shall be made for, or rather to, him continually, and daily shall he be praised* ‡.

In order, however, if possible, incontestably to establish this point, I will mention some special.

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* Rom. x. 13.

§ Dial. I. page 21.

† Dan. v. 27.

‡ Psal. lxxij. 15.

cial instances of persons who, after our Lord's ascension, paid their religious honours and supplications to him. — Stephen, the first disciple who suffered death for the testimony of his Lord and Master, after the ascension of Christ into heaven, offered up his last petitions to this compassionate and prayer-hearing Saviour. LORD JESUS *receive my spirit* *. An important request indeed ! A prayer which undoubtedly implies a firm and well-grounded persuasion of the Divine Character of the person addressed ; for, a Divine Person alone could be equal to the momentous charge which was now committed to him by this illustrious sufferer.

Indeed, had not the departing saint had a clear perception of the almighty power of Jesus, he would never, I think, have committed his immortal spirit into his protection. But, from a consciousness of this, with what pleasure, with what heart-felt joy, would he resign the important charge into so safe a hand ! And what I think is very remarkable in this prayer, is, Its near affinity to that which our Lord himself addressed, in similar circumstances, to his heavenly Father ; and therefore we may conclude that Stephen considered Christ as being truly GOD, as our Lord knew that his heavenly Father was so.

This instance, then, remains a striking proof of divine or religious worship being given to Christ ;

* Acts vii. 59.

Dial. VIII. GIVEN TO CHRIST. 151

Christ; and so long as the Bible is regarded as the rule of our actions, it will not only justify, but excite us to the practice. And, in my opinion, this single instance, if there were no other, is sufficient to prove the Divinity of our Lord, seeing that upon any other supposition, this remarkably eminent saint, finished his life in an act of the grossest idolatry.

NEO. I have been told that, "this text by no means implies that Stephen acknowledged Christ to be God," but I now think that it is clearly and sufficiently expressive of it; for otherwise he certainly would never have committed so important a charge into his hands.—But you will produce some other instances.

PHIL. Paul, that truly eminent servant of Christ, often invoked, or called upon his Master for spiritual blessings. Particularly we are told, that after he had been favoured in so peculiar a manner as to be *caught up into paradise*, and to hear *unspeakable words*, lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him. For this thing, says he, *I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness* *.

NEO.

* 2. Cor. xii, 4—9.

NEO. But do you apprehend that the Lord Jesus Christ is intended ?

PHIL. Yes. And let the following part of the verse, which contains the apostle's resolution in consequence of the above-mentioned declaration being made to him, be duly attended to, and you will, I doubt not, see the reason which has fully determined my judgement in this.—*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the POWER of CHRIST may rest upon me**. So that, you see, the *grace*, or *strength* which was promised to the afflicted, though eminent saint, was nothing else than the POWER of CHRIST ; or in other words, that divine support and comfort, which was necessary for him, that he might bear every trial with Christian fortitude, patience, and resignation.

The person, then, whom Paul addressed, and who said MY grace is sufficient, &c. was the Lord Jesus Christ, the compassionate Saviour and Redeemer of sinners, who *giveth power to the faint*, and who *increaseth strength to them that have no might* †.

NEO. That our Lord was the object whom the *apostle besought*, appears to me now sufficiently clear ; and I am not a little surprised, that I never before considered it in this point of light. *Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man* §.

PHIL.

* 2 Cor. xii. 9. † Isaiah xl. 29. § Prov. xxx. 2.

PHIL. That was the complaint of a person who, in his day and generation, was conspicuously eminent both for his wisdom and holiness. And while we are in such a disposition of mind we may expect to be guided into all necessary truth; for *the meek will God guide in judgement, and the meek will he teach his way**. But to the point.

The great apostle, conscious that *in Christ all fullness dwells*†, and that he is the great dispenser of every needed grace, in almost every epistle, directs a prayer immediately to him, that he would bestow on those to whom Paul wrote, all those graces which are necessary, either for their present welfare or their final salvation. And that those graces might so influence and govern their spirits here, as to fit them for his service, and form them into a greater meetness for the enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance.

To this purpose are the following passages. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all*||. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*§. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit*‡. And, *The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit*** . So that if Christ be the giver of all grace, as these texts, I think, evidently declare, he must certainly be possessed of a DIVINE CHARACTER, and consequently be a proper object of our homage and adoration.

Again;

* Psal. xxv. 9. † Col. i. 19. || Rom. xvi. 24. § 1 Cor. xvi. 23. Phil. iv. 23. 2 Thes. iii. 18. ‡ Gal. vi. 18. Phil. xxv. ** 2 Tim. iv. 22.

Again; in order to shew the perfect equality which subsists among the DIVINE THREE, the ever-to-be-adored JEHOVAH, and that each is to be addressed according to the distinct part which he bears in the economy of our redemption, the same inspired writer puts up a prayer expressly directed to each, for a communion of those spiritual blessings which always *accompany* the salvation of Christ.

NEO. You will be so kind as mention the passage which you have your eye upon, that I may not be wholly unacquainted with it.

PHIL. It is this: *The GRACE of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the LOVE of GOD, that is, the FATHER, and the COMMUNION of the HOLY GHOST, be with you all**. From which passage, nothing, I should think, can be more obvious, than that the SON is as much considered as the object of prayer as the Father, and consequently he must, as to his Divine Nature, be perfectly equal with him.

And to add no more instances of this kind, what can be more striking, or more pertinent to
our

* 2 Cor. xiii. 14. 'It is with great propriety, that this short, but comprehensive, and instructive benediction is pronounced, just before our assemblies for public worship are dismissed; and it is a very *indecent*, and permit me to add, *irreverent* thing, for any to quit them, or even get into postures of remove, before this short sentence can be distinctly pronounced. I hope all who read this note, will, for the future, pay a particular attention to this part of their behaviour in the public assembly.

our purpose, than the emphatical prayer addressed to our Lord by the whole universal church, and with which the sacred cannon closes. He declares, *Surely I come quickly.* To which declaration John, as the representative of the church, affixes his *Amen*; and then more fully expresses his meaning, by adding *Even so, Come, Lord Jesus* * !

On the whole, then, since religious worship is to be given to none but GOD; and since it plainly appears from the passages above cited, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST is the object of religious worship; *this*, surely, is a sufficient reason, to evince his true and proper DIVINITY.—Indeed, upon any other supposition, the true disciples of Christ, not excepting even the apostles themselves, if there be any force in the above reasoning, must, in every age, have been guilty of the grossest and most shameful idolatry. But the thought of this can never be admitted.

NEO. No. For then the inspired writings must certainly be deemed erroneous, and all universally who have followed their directions, have *worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever* †; and consequently have been excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven. So that, I am well persuaded, if the Lord Jesus Christ had not been GOD, these acts of worship would never have been received by

* Rev. xxii. 20.

† Rom. i. 25.

156 DIVINE WORSHIP Dial. VIII.

by him, unless he had been a notorious impostor.

PHIL. Another argument to prove that divine worship is due to Christ, is taken from those numerous *doxologies*, or ascriptions of praise and thanksgiving to God, in which he is considered as the principal object.—Thus the apostle Peter, speaking of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, says, *To HIM be glory, both now and for ever, Amen* *. And another apostle, speaking of the same most glorious object †, says, *To the only wise God our SAVIOUR, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever* ‡. Once more: The beloved disciple, after pointing out various important characters of his Lord and Master, adds these remarkable and soul-comforting words; *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER* §.

Now, it is evident that these *doxologies*, which are given to our Lord, are exactly similar to those which are elsewhere given to the Father; as when it is said, *To HIM be glory and dominion for ever and ever* ||.—So that, if they are manifestly acts of divine worship, when used with respect to the Father, we have no reason, I think, to take them for any other when they are offered to the Lord Jesus Christ. NEO.

* 2 Pet. iii. 18. † For the proof of this see Dial. 2. p. 48.

‡ Jude. ver. 25. § Rev. i. 5, 6. || 1 Pet. v. 10.

Dial. VIII. GIVEN TO CHRIST. 157

NEO. Since these forms of thanksgiving, which are ascribed both to the Father and to our Lord, bear so exact a resemblance one to another, that not the least circumstantial difference is to be discerned between them, it should seem, indeed, that they are to be understood precisely in the same sense.

PHIL. To put the matter beyond all reasonable doubt, I would observe farther, that we find those glorious Personages united together in the same doxology, and having the same ascription of praise given to them both.—*I beheld,* says the highly-favoured disciple, *and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne,—saying—Worthy is the LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth,—heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto HIM THAT SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, and unto the LAMB for ever and ever*.*

None I think can doubt, who pay the least attention to the language of scripture, that our Saviour is intended in the passage now quoted, since he is so particularly described by his well-known character, *the LAMB that was slain*. And that he is also considered as sustaining the same dignity with the Father, is, in my opinion,

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* Rev. v. 11—13.

equally clear, since it is said, that this glory, &c. is given to *him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb*. For, there is doubtless such an infinite disproportion between the ever-blessed God, and the most dignified creature, that our religious respect to the one and to the other, if such respect were due to a creature, can never fitly be paid at the same time, in the same language, and the same external acts of devotion. The same glory and dominion can never be consistently ascribed to both.

The plain truth is, either our Lord's Divine Character must be admitted, and his Deity acknowledged, or otherwise the most forced, unnatural, and absurd explication must be given of the above, and almost numberless other passages in the sacred scriptures. For, were not He that *sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb*, perfectly equal, in every excellency, perfection, and glory, we ought to put the greatest difference words can make between them; since, upon that supposition, the *finite* excellencies, and merely *borrowed* power of the one, could bear no proportion to the eternal, infinite excellencies, and the absolutely supreme dominion of the other.

Since, then, our Saviour is worshipped with exactly the same worship as the Father; and seeing that he has never forbidden any thus to worship him, we must conclude that he is equally the proper object thereof, and consequently a DIVINE PERSON. NEO.

NEO. The argument, indeed, seems sufficiently conclusive, nor do I see how the force of it can possibly be evaded. For, did not the Son of God possess a perfect equality with the Father; did he not actually partake of the same incomparable perfections; they would never surely have the very same acts of religious worship paid to them.

PHIL. Certainly they would not; and therefore, our argument drawn from it, will, I believe, remain unanswerable.—But, there are some other considerations which I am unwilling to omit, since they will, I am persuaded, in the judgement of every candid and ingenuous person, bring a considerable accession of strength to the cause. What I have now particularly in view, are the two most glorious ordinances instituted by our Lord, to be observed by all his disciples; I mean, Baptism, and the Supper.

NEO. I should be glad to hear your reflections upon these, and the rather, since I have lately heard them, I think, greatly depreciated, and their importance in religion called in question.

PHIL. Christian Baptism, then, I think one of the highest, most solemn, and important acts of devotion imaginable. An act in which there is an explicit mention of the names of the Divine Three, FATHER, SON, and HOLY

GHOST ; and by which the subject baptized, solemnly and publickly devotes himself to the service of the triune God, with an express and peculiar acknowledgement of the personal glories of each of the Sacred Three, and the part that he bears in the economy of our salvation.

The words of the original command, given by our Lord to his disciples, you know are, *Go—teach all nations, baptizing them IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST* *. And if, as we have just observed, our being baptized in the name of the Father, be expressive of our solemn dedication to the faith, worship, and service of the Father ; then, by a parity of reason, being baptized in the name of the Son, must necessarily imply the like dedication to HIM.

Since, then, baptism is so solemn, important, and comprehensive an act of worship, that it includes in it the whole of that subjection which is due to the Father, Son, and Spirit ; and since, in particular, the SON is considered as the object thereof, together with the Father, it naturally and necessarily follows, from these premises, that he is GOD equal with the Father.

NEO. What you have observed seems indeed fairly deducible from the heavenly mandate ; but there are persons who think differently from you in this, and suppose that the text does not imply an equality of the Father, Son, and Holy

* Matt. xxviii. 19.

Holy Ghost, because, “ the apostle Paul says, That *the children of Israel were baptized unto Moses* *.” Yet, “ he certainly could not mean that Moses was their God.”

PHIL. No; certainly he did not. And to suppose that he did is a most egregious and palpable absurdity. A supposition so grossly absurd, that I am persuaded it never entered into the mind of any candid reader. But, is there no difference between being *baptized unto Moses*, and that glorious, and solemn institution of Christ which we are now considering? If, indeed, it could be shewn, that the Israelites were, at the same time, baptized in the *name* of God, and in the *name* of Moses, this would, I confess, give some appearance of argument to the objection that you have mentioned. But as no evidence of this can, I believe, be produced, we must insist, that, being baptized *unto* Moses, is by no means similar to being baptized *in his name*; and much less in conjunction with those of the Father, and the Holy Ghost.

‘ The apostle himself, who is certainly the best interpreter of his own words, shews us, that these expressions are far from being synonymous; for he asks the Corinthians with an evident abhorrence of the thought, *Were ye baptized IN THE NAME OF Paul* †? Nay, he rejoices that he had baptized so few Christian converts at Corinth, *lest any should say, that he*

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had

* 1 Cor. x. 2.

† 1 Cor. i. 13.

162 DIVINE WORSHIP Dial. VIII.

had baptized IN HIS OWN NAME *.' So that, from this reasoning of the apostle, it appears exceedingly obvious, that he considered the being baptized in the *name* of a person, as expressive of a solemn, personal dedication of ourselves to the service of him in whose name we are baptized, and therefore ought never to be performed but in the *name* of HIM, *whose we are, and whom*, therefore, we OUGHT to serve †.

On the whole, we must still insist, that baptism is an act of worship absolutely unalienable from the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and therefore, unless our Saviour were greatly deficient in common honesty, he would never, certainly, have joined his own name with his Father's, when he gave forth the commission to baptize, if he had not a right to our worship and services as well as the Father. No; if the Person called the SON were not really Divine, we might with equal propriety be baptized in the name of Paul, or any other of the apostles, as in his name, which is a just consequence from its being an act of religious worship; for, no created being, as we have already shown, § can, without an open violation of the Divine command, be the object of religious adoration.

NEO. The form to be used in the proper administration of baptism, to wit, that it be done jointly in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is, indeed, a striking proof of
their

* 1 Cor. i. 15. † Acts xxvii. 23. Psal. c. § Dial. VII.
pages 125, 126.

Dial. VIII. GIVEN TO CHRIST. 163

their perfect, and absolute equality; and I am now, I confess, not a little surprized, that any person who disbelieves this, should ever administer the ordinance according to the original command for it.

PHIL. It is indeed, amazing; and, I think, a mere mockery of God. And some Ministers I have been credibly informed, who disbelieve the Divinity of the Son and Holy Ghost, are so sensible of the impropriety of using the prescribed form, that they entirely reject it, and baptize *in the name of the Great God*; and so shamefully curtail a glorious institution, and leave out what is absolutely essential to a proper performance of it.—But to return.

The other ordinance of the gospel, namely, the Lord's Supper, is, like Baptism, a solemn act of divine worship; and has ever been regarded as such by the real disciples of Christ in every age.—Now the primary end of this most glorious institution, is particularly to honour our adorable SAVIOUR; by a grateful commemoration of his stupendous and unparalleled love——by declaring our sole reliance upon his death for the remission of our sins——by expressing our faith in his second coming——and by solemnly devoting ourselves to his service.

The LORD JESUS CHRIST, then, is most eminently the object of that homage and devotion, which is required in this holy institution. *Here* we are to explore the matchless wonders

wonders of his love; who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, and was *obedient to death, even the death of the cross* *; and we are likewise to exercise every suitable grace. So that, from these premises, we may, I think, fairly and certainly conclude, that he bears a Divine Character.

NEO. These solemn acts of worship, in which our Saviour is the chief object with whom we have to do, or at least, in which he is equally so with the Father, appear to me an irresistible evidence of his Divinity; my mind entirely acquiesces in it. And, I hope, I shall never again be brought into that perplexity and uneasiness, which you know I have for some time laboured under on this account: No; the evidence produced from the sacred scriptures is so plain and striking, that all the specious reasoning and artful insinuation used by those who oppose it, will never, I trust, either subvert my faith, or shake my confidence.

There are, however, a few other things that I have met with, which I will take the liberty to mention to you, before we entirely dismiss the subject, not in the least doubting but you will give me a patient and candid hearing.

PHIL. Whatever difficulty may as yet remain upon your mind, I would have you to mention without the least reserve; and, if it lie
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* Phil. ii. 8.

Dial. VIII. GIVEN TO CHRIST. 165

in my power, a plain and full solution shall immediately be given to it. This, however, must be deferred to another opportunity; and in the mean time let us, with all the heavenly host, be ascribing, both with our lips, and by our lives, *salvation, honour, power, and glory, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.*

DIA-

DIALOGUE IX.

PHIL. **I**N the close of our last conference, after expressing your approbation of what has been urged, in proof of the DIVINITY of our Lord, and your entire acquiescence therein, you intimated I think, Neophytus, "that there were a few things you had met with, which you should like to mention, before the subject was entirely dismissed."

NEO. I did; and as you now give me an opportunity for it, I shall without the least hesitation or reserve lay them before you.

PHIL. All due attention will, I trust, be given to them; only give me leave to premise, that there is no one truth of the Christian religion, how important and well-attested soever, which has not been warmly opposed, and virulently exclaimed against. Such objections, however,

ever, by no means affect the truth itself; for *that*, like its glorious Author, is absolutely and eternally immutable in its nature; but they have a direct tendency to embarrass those who are weak, and sometimes, perhaps, to remove every scruple which may perplex even a well-meaning person, may be attended with considerable difficulty, if it be not absolutely impossible.

Nor is this to be at all wondered at; for, divine truths, those especially that have reference to the nature of God, are, as the necessary consequence of the vast sublimity of the object, absolutely incomprehensible by the human mind; at least, in its present enfeebled and benighted state. Hence those humbling and necessary questions are put; *Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know*?* The object is far too great and disproportioned, to be fully comprehended and searched out by us; it entirely embarrasses and oversets, the utmost efforts of our shallow understandings.

NEO. I trust I shall ever be humble in my religious enquiries, especially concerning *the deep things of God*†; and not be solicitous in searching for that, which the Divine Spirit has not seen fit to reveal unto us. I have
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* Job xi. 7, 8. † 1 Cor. ii. 10.

been told, and I firmly believe the truth of the remark, that, 'with respect to divine subjects, to reason *rightly* is entirely to submit our reason to the wisdom of God.'

PHIL. Undoubtedly it is ; for, *the secret things*, the minute particularities of things, *belong unto the Lord our God ; here* we must be content to be *coasters* only, and cruise about the shore, without ever entering into the *inland parts* of the country ; *But those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever* *. All our researches then are to be bounded by the line of revelation ; nor ought we, in any instance, to attempt to be wise *above what is written* †.

We are never, indeed, throughout the bible, once required to puzzle ourselves or others with *metaphysical* disquisitions, *how*, or in what *particular manner* things are in themselves ; or to penetrate into the intrinsic nature of God. No ; in whatever relates to the Divine Being, it is sufficient for all the purposes of religion, if we understand the terms of the proposition, and the proof of it from revelation ; nor ought we to grasp at those things, to which our narrow capacities are not suited.

We should consider, then, how far our point of view extends, that falls within the reach of every well-constituted eye, and what is *far above*
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* Deut. xxix. 29. † 1 Cor. iv. 6.

out of our sight* ; for, we may with greater propriety affirm, that the horizon which determines our prospect is the boundary of the universe, than that our shallow, contracted understandings are the measure of divine truth. — But I will no longer preclude what you have to observe, by any further remarks of this kind.

NEO. The objection against the Deity of our Lord, which is chiefly insisted on, and which, in my apprehension, appears most plausible, is, its supposed inconsistency with the unity of God : “ For how is it possible,” say those who oppose the doctrine, “ that *three* persons, *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, should be separately, each of them, possessed of all divine perfections, so as to be *true*, *very*, and *eternal* God, and yet that there should be but one God ; a truth which is so clearly and fully revealed, that it is not possible for men to refuse their assent unto it.”

PHIL. It is an easy matter for persons to misrepresent a doctrine, and exhibit it in such a point of light, as that it will appear most monstrously absurd, and then triumph as though they had gained a victory. But such a procedure is extremely disingenuous, and by no means comports with that candour and integrity, which ought ever to be manifested by “ A Lover of the Gospel.”

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NEO.

* Psal. x. 5.

NEO. Certainly it does not. But is this the case in the above objection?

PHIL. Yes; for, Whoever speaks of the Sacred Three as being “separately” possessed of divine perfections? Not the *generality* of those who believe what is commonly, and with sufficient propriety, called the doctrine of the *Trinity*; nay, I query whether even an *individual* can be found amongst them who states it in that light. No; though we firmly believe and constantly maintain a *distinction* in the Divine Nature, yet we are far from thinking that there is either a *separate*, or a *divided* existence.

The Divine *unity* is, in our estimation, a doctrine of the greatest importance; and it certainly is, as the Author you have quoted justly observes, “a truth so fully and clearly revealed, that it is not possible for men to refuse their assent unto it.” So that, those who maintain the Deity of Christ, are equally as strenuous in asserting the *unity* of God, as those who oppose it; for *that*, they apprehend, is the sole basis of the leading truths of divine revelation, and, indeed, of all religion.

But, then, though they strenuously maintain the divine *unity*; though they are conscious of its vast importance in the Christian scheme; and though they steadily assert that it is the *basis* of religion; yet, they do not believe it in such a sense, as to exclude that *distinction* in the Deity, which they think is so plainly revealed in the
word

word of God. For, reason tells them, that in *nature* there are many things which have an unity in one respect, which, nevertheless, admit of a distinction in another. And, therefore, they are inclined to think, that, to suppose the Divine Being to exist in such a manner, as sufficiently to justify the use of the different appellations, FATHER, WORD, or SON, and HOLY GHOST, which are so frequently used in the scripture of truth, to represent the distinct part which each of the Sacred Three bears in the redemption of guilty man, is neither an improbable, nor an unreasonable supposition. And this is all that we contend for.

Indeed, we think that the above-mentioned *distinction* in the DEITY, is written as with a sunbeam in the sacred pages; that it is not a whit less clear than the doctrine of the *unity* of God; and that, without admitting it to make any tolerable sense of a thousand scriptures, even for the most acute and quick-sighted person, is absolutely impossible. Were it not rather foreign to our present subject, which, you know, is not the *proof* of this, but only to evince that it is not impossible, I would with great pleasure point out those passages to you.

NEO. You have observed that in *nature* there are many objects which admit both of an unity and plurality; but some persons, perhaps, may think that the observation does not fully reach

the point in hand, nor sufficiently illustrate that important object.

PHIL. It may be so ; seeing that to illustrate was not my design. For, I have long thought that all illustrations, so far from assisting our conceptions of this truth, have rather tended to darken and confuse them. And the reason why I made the remark, was, to evince how far even *natural* things, surpass our shallow, and contracted minds.

In direct answer, then, to the objection, I would observe, That *how* the DIVINE THREE exist together in one essence, is not, that I can find, any where revealed to us in the oracles of GOD. It is indeed proper only for his own infinite mind to investigate. We have not, I think, one single intimation of it throughout the bible ; and, therefore, it is not, surely, in any sense, the subject of our faith ; for, we are not required to believe any thing, respecting spiritual objects, but what is revealed in the scripture of truth.

That the divine Essence is triune ; or, in other words, that there is a distinction in it, of FATHER, WORD, and HOLY GHOST, is, it was before observed, a divinely-attested truth ; and consequently demands our most cordial assent. The proposition, therefore, which we believe, is perfectly intelligible ; it is a plain and obvious fact, declared to us by him *who cannot lie*. So that we believe it upon the best
and

and most incontestible authority ; namely, the
DIVINE TESTIMONY.

If, then, the Supreme Being, who certainly is the best acquainted with the mode of his own existence, has been pleased to reveal himself unto us in this manner, we should certainly be extremely cautious of pronouncing it *impossible*, or despising and rejecting it as a glaring absurdity. Is not such a procedure, in effect, to tell the *only wise God* That he is mistaken, and that the description which he has given of himself in his word, is not entirely and strictly true ? nay, that it is absolutely *impossible* it should be so ?

NEO. But if this doctrine be not *impossible*, is it not an “impious” or wicked one ?

PHIL. No ; but directly the reverse of it. And this must necessarily be the case ; for, all universally who embrace it, are taught, by the Spirit of God, to give *divine honours* to each of the Sacred Three ; and to live as those who are *chosen* by the Father, *redeemed* by the Son, and the *temples* in whom the Holy Ghost resides. So far is it, therefore, from being an “impious” doctrine, that, on the contrary, it is a most *pious* and *holy* one : a *doctrine*, which, to use the apostle’s expression, is, in every respect, *according to godliness* *. Indeed, I might, were such a procedure eligible, easily retort the charge of

* 1 Tim. vi. 3.

of impiety, as the genuine offspring of the opposite sentiment, and for the proof of it appeal to the conduct of the generality of those who espouse and maintain it. But as this would be too invidious a task, I shall entirely decline it.

Upon the whole; if revelation be admitted to decide in the present controversy; if we refer to the law and to the testimony only; in a word, if we will allow that the Divine Being has the most perfect knowledge of the mode of his own existence, and has given a true representation of his Character unto us; I say, if these things be granted, which surely none will deny, then we may be assured, that there is not the least opposition between the doctrine of the divine *unity*, and that *distinction* in his nature which he has been pleased to make known unto us. For, since both are clearly revealed, undoubtedly they harmonize, and therefore we ought implicitly to believe them. And, surely, Reason herself requires an implicit assent to divine testimony, though the thing testified be, in itself, an inexplicable mystery.

Thus, you see, the whole of this doctrine may be brought into a small compass, and is plainly this: God speaks of himself, in his word, as though he were three distinct *persons*; the manner *how* this is, is wholly concealed from us; nor is it any way necessary that we should know it; we must, therefore, either receive the divine testimony, or reject it. If we
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reject a part of it, for the same reason we may reject the whole? And, indeed, that there is but a thin partition between those who disbelieve the Divinity of CHRIST, and those who reject the scriptures entirely, is, in my opinion, no difficult matter to prove.

NEO. But some persons say, that "it requires more subtilty and refinement to enter into the doctrine above mentioned, than the common people are masters of"; and that, "men of plain understandings, in fact, never do believe any such thing."

PHIL. After *so great a cloud of witnesses* * have openly declared their faith in this important article, and have repeatedly told the world what their sentiments were upon this head, for any to assert that "they never did believe any such thing," or, in other words, that they have all been dishonest, hypocritical persons, is surely a striking evidence of a want of candour, and therefore unworthy of a "Lover of the Gospel."

But, What is there so extremely difficult in what we are required to believe, that "men of plain understandings" can never embrace it? It is, as has already been observed, a plain matter of fact, which rests entirely upon divine testimony. The *proofs* of the doctrine are sufficiently clear, and even as to the *manner*, it is not more difficult to conceive of, than many other.

* Heb. xii. 1.

other of the most important things which are made known to us in divine revelation.

Indeed, whoever believes the existence of a GOD, must believe, what is to us at least, an incomprehensible mystery, it having been, I think, incontestibly proved, by a writer of the first rank *, that whatever has existed from eternity, exists in a manner of which we can frame no notion, but what is big with *seeming* absurdities. And though this is a clear demonstration of the defectiveness of our ideas, yet it is not assigned as a reason why we should reject the doctrine of the *eternity* of God : And if it be not in the one case, why should it in the other ?

The truth is, “men of plain understandings” may believe, and have *general* ideas, that the Divine Three, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are *distinct* without being divided ; united but not confounded. And this general view is sufficient, to answer all those glorious purposes for which God saw fit to reveal it to us.—‘ And those *repugnancies to reason* which some persons imagine they have discovered in this doctrine, are only like the retrograde, and *seemingly* irregular motions of the planets ; they are only *seeming*, not *real* ; and are owing to the *height* of the objects, their *distance* from us, and the *incommodiousness* of our *situation* for a just discernment of these things. Could we see from a proper point of view, we should find, that what *appeared to us* irregular, was *in itself* equal and uniform.’

NEO.

* Addison. See Spect. vol. viii. No. 590.

NEO. As the Supreme Being has, in great mercy to poor benighted mortals, made such glorious discoveries of himself unto us, though I cannot conceive *how* they are in themselves, yet I hope that, from this evening, I shall never doubt either of the truth or propriety of them. I see, in some measure, the vast importance of this doctrine in the Christian scheme, and am really amazed, that so many, who profess to believe the divine authority of the scriptures, should reject so capital a truth.

There are, however, some other reasons assigned, why the doctrine of Christ's proper Deity cannot be true, besides that of its inconsistency with the unity of God.—“The Father,” it is alledged, “is frequently stiled God, even with respect to Christ, as well as other beings.” But, What propriety is there in such a mode of expression, if there were an equality between them?

PHIL. That expressions importing inferiority are, in the scriptures, frequently applied to Christ, is readily allowed. But this concession does not, I think, in the least invalidate the truth of our doctrine, nor at all embarrass the numerous, and forcible arguments which are produced in the proof of it.

For, as the Divine Redeemer has a *human*, and consequently a *derived* nature; and as *this* nature is ever to be included in the idea of the *person* of the Mediator, so, in this respect, he is,

is, we freely grant, inferior to the Father. However, those terms of inferiority will not, I think, have the least tendency, in the judgement of any impartial reader, to invalidate his proper *equality* with him.

Had not the mediatorial office, been a *voluntary* undertaking; had not the Eternal Word engaged in it *willingly*; then, indeed, his equality might, with some appearance of argument, be denied. But the scriptures invariably represent it as a singular instance of divine love, and an act of unparalleled, inexpressible grace. Hence the apostle says,

Ye know the GRACE, the inconceivable love, of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet, for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich *. So that, all the terms of inferiority, be they ever so numerous, may, with the greatest propriety, as appears from the preceding considerations, be applied to our Lord's inferior, and assumed nature.

NEO. But it is said, that Christ "speaks of himself in his highest capacity, when he speaks of himself as the *Son*, corresponding to the *Father*;" now, in this character, he declared, when he was upon earth, that the precise time of the day of judgement was absolutely unknown to him; and that it was known to the Father only. If, therefore, the Redeemer speaks of himself in his highest character as the

Son,

* 2 Cor. viii. 9.

Son, then that some things were unknown to him is evident ; and the consequence you know is obvious, he must be inferior : Inferior, not only as *man*, or Mediator, but even, according to the objection, in his highest character ; that is, as *the only begotten Son of God*.

PHIL. Were the great EMMANUEL considered in his highest capacity when he is spoken of as the *Son* ; were that expression the most sublime which the scripture attributed to him ; then, the objection would, I ingenuously confess, appear to me of considerable force. But, the Lord Jesus Christ did not, in my opinion, though with deference to some respectable authorities, intend, by the appellation *Son*, to convey the idea of perfect equality. Nor is there, that I can find, any one passage in the word of God, where that term is used, which *necessarily* requires such a construction.

The PERSON, indeed, called the SON of GOD, is, as has I trust been fully proved, truly and properly Divine ; essentially one with the Father and the Holy Ghost. But then, his Divinity is not *derivative*, nor does he partake of it, in consequence of his Sonship. No ; with respect to their mode of existing, the most perfect equality subsists among the Divine Three. 'None is afore, or after other ; none is greater or less than another ;' which must, I should think, necessarily be the case if one of them were a Son with respect to his Divine Nature.

If .

If then it be allowed, that the appellation Son, when applied to our Saviour, does not express his highest character, the force of the objection, you see, entirely vanishes; and all its strength, like Sampson's when he was shaven, is totally enervated. For, though we grant that the Son knew not the day of judgement, yet that it was unknown to him in a *higher* character, to wit, as the WORD who was with God, and was God, is by no means a necessary, or natural consequence.

NEO. But, the text is express: *Of that day knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father* *. Now, though you assert that Christ as a Son, is inferior to the Father, yet you say that the PERSON called the Son of God is properly Divine; or that Deity may be properly affirmed of him. But, for this glorious personage to deny that any thing was unknown to him in one nature, which was perfectly known in another, is, in the opinion of some persons, "a mean prevarication, and unworthy of our Lord."

PHIL. For the adorable Emmanuel, during his personal ministry among men, to deny something of himself without limitation, which, nevertheless, could be denied only of one of his natures, was no uncommon nor unfrequent thing. For instance: A little before he ascend-
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* Mark xiii. 32.

ed to his Father, he said to his disciples, *And now I am no more in the world* *. And again : *Ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always* †. But neither of these declarations is true, except with respect to his human nature, or corporal presence. For, with respect to his Divine Nature, or spiritual presence, *that*, he has positively declared, shall be with his ministers, *ALWAY, even to the end of the world* ‡.

So that the divine Teacher might, I think, be equally charged with prevarication in these passages as in the other. Nay, the charge would certainly be fixed with far *greater* propriety ; since in the former he speaks with an express limitation, as *Son* ; whereas the latter are left without the least restriction, or reserve.

On the whole, then, as two distinct natures were united in the Person of Christ, I see no reason why he might not sometimes speak of himself with respect to one of them, and sometimes with respect to the other, without being guilty of the least prevarication. However, that he did distinguish them in this manner is apparent, from many express passages in his own discourses ; nor are they, I think, any proof, either of inequality or disingenuity.

NEO. What you have observed relative to the above-mentioned text, appears to me satisfactory enough. But there are a few other passages of the divine word, which seem to militate

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* John xvii. 11. † Matt. xxvi. 11. ‡ Ibid xxviii. 20.

tate against the Deity of Christ, you will therefore be so kind as explain *them* unto me.

Our Lord, you know, has, in his intercessory prayer, this important and remarkable expression: *This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent**. Now, it is asked, "Could our Lord say this with truth, and without an unworthy prevarication, if any other person, not implied in the term *Father*, was as much the true God as himself?"

PHIL. *That*, and some other passages of the word of God, of a similar nature, are not, I think, attended with any considerable degree of difficulty; nor does it require any extraordinary sagacity, to give an easy solution to them. A little attention to the leading design of the writer will, I believe, in this, as well as most other places, sufficiently open the genuine sense of the text, and lead us into the precise idea which he designed to convey.

NEO. Be so kind then as explain it a little to me.

PHIL. The prophets, you may remember, speak of the gospel age, as a time when spiritual knowledge should greatly, and almost universally prevail. Among other glorious things, they declare, that, *There shall be one Lord, and his name one*†.

The nations of the world, before this much-wished-for period arrived, were suffered to live in

* John xvii. 3, † Zach. xiv. 9.

in a state of the grossest, and most lamentable darkness. They worshipped a multiplicity of deities, in different forms, and by various ways. And even the most polite nation, which of all others had made the greatest advances in every branch of useful literature, had altars erected *To the unknown God* *.

But the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Teacher of his church, according to the import of his commission, has in the most explicit manner, declared to us the real character of the Object of our worship. He has told us, that the divine Unity is the first principle of all religion †. And therefore, all who cordially embrace his Gospel, must, as a necessary consequence, relinquish every false, and improper object of worship. The Gentiles, accordingly, who believed in Jesus, immediately renounced their idols of stocks and stones, and worshipped *the living and true God* ‡, by, or through the Mediator Christ Jesus.

NEO. So then you think that the phrase, *the only true God*, is opposed,—not to Jesus, so as to exclude him from partaking of Deity, but to the many false, and idol gods of the Gentile nations.

PHIL. Ay; that is my idea of it, and it is, I think, exceedingly obvious from the very face of the passage. For, our Lord is speaking of the special *grant* which was made to him by his

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Father,

* Acts xvii. 23. † Mark xii. 29. ‡ 1 Thess. i. 9.

Father, in consequence of his *finishing the important work which was given him to do**. Which grant, he says, is a *power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as were given him*. That these persons, therefore, might come to the enjoyment of this life, they must have a spiritual knowledge of God; relinquish their idolatrous practices; and worship the only true God, even the Father, in spirit and in truth.

Besides, that a guilty sinner may obtain salvation, he must not only know the character of God as the *only true God*, but he must also know that the *Word was made flesh*; and that because he was *anointed to be the Saviour*† of rebellious sinners, he was called JESUS CHRIST. For, without the knowledge of *this*, where the light of divine revelation shines, salvation is not, in my opinion, attainable by any. Our Lord, therefore, might, with the greatest propriety, say, *This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*; inasmuch as, both these characters are absolutely necessary to be known, in order to enjoy, or come to the possession of that life which Jesus calls *eternal*.

NEO. Do you think that those other texts which are mentioned by the apostle, which seem to be nearly similar to this, are to be understood in the same sense? I mean when he says to the church at Corinth, *To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we*
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* John xvii. 5.

† Matt. i. 27.

in him *. And to the church at Ephesus, *One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all* §.

PHIL. With respect to the first of these texts, that what we have already observed relative to our Lord's words, is the meaning of the apostle, to me, appears obvious. For, if you read over the chapter, you will see that the writer is particularly treating concerning idolatrous worship, or the offering of sacrifices unto idols. Now, *an idol*, he says, *is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one* †. For *though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth; as the sun, moon, and stars in that, and a variety of creatures, even the most stupid and senseless in this; though the Heathen nations, during the time of their ignorance, worshipped those celestial and terrestrial deities; though they had many gods, and many lords, yet to us, who have embraced the gospel of Jesus, and have been delivered from this deplorable state of midnight darkness, there is but one God the Father, and we in him.*

So that, from this easy and natural explication, the opposition, you see, is not between the Father and the Son, as though one was God and the other not so, but only a mere creature; the opposition, I say, does not lie here, but between the *one* God of the Christians, and the *many* gods of the Heathen nations.

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Besides,

* 1 Cor. viii. 6. § Eph. iv. 5, 6. † 1 Cor. viii. 4, 5.

Besides, upon the supposition that the Father was opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ, he would, as many have justly observed, be excluded from the production of many things, both in nature and grace. For, the apostle says expressly of the Lord Jesus, that, *By him are all things, and we by him* *. The above-mentioned sense of the text, therefore, is, I think, the only real and genuine one.

NEO. This appears pretty clear to me, be so kind therefore as proceed to the other.

PHIL. When the apostle says, *There is one Lord,——one God and Father of all*, a small degree of attention to the scope of the argument will, I believe, be sufficient to find out his meaning here also.

He is exhorting the members of the church at Ephesus to the continual exercise of Christian graces and dispositions. *Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, &c.* And effectually to engage their compliance with this exhortation, he urges the most cogent, and irresistible motives. Particularly the near relation which subsisted among them. *There is one body*, of which you are severally members, and therefore should by no means quarrel one with another. Which body is animated by one *Spirit*, even the Holy Spirit of God, and consequently ye should obey his gracious dictates. There is, likewise, *one Lord*, whom

* 1. Cor. viii. 6.

whom ye all acknowledge as your glorious head, even Jesus the King of saints. Besides, you have *one faith*; that glorious rule of *faith which was once delivered to the saints*. And you have all been baptized, upon a profession of your faith, with that *one baptism* which the Lord Jesus Christ himself instituted, and commanded his ambassadours to administer to all who embraced his gospel. To all which, I may add, that, there is *one God and Father of all*; you have all one common Father, are children of the same family, and therefore should not, on any consideration, fall out by the way.

So that the apostle, in my opinion, points out the distinct part which each of the Divine Three bears in the salvation of guilty sinners, without intimating the least opposition or inferiority among them.

Besides, as we observed of the preceding text, were the Father spoken of in opposition to the Son, Christ being called Lord, would equally exclude him from any share of government in the church; and therefore it cannot be the genuine sense.

NEO. I am perfectly satisfied with this explication, as it appears extremely natural and easy. I do not remember that I have any other objection of weight to propose to you; those which I have already mentioned are the principal which I have met with, or, however, which have appeared in any measure forcible to my own mind.

The

The unparalleled glory of our dear Redeemer, will, I trust, be frequently the subject, on which I shall meditate with peculiar pleasure. Methinks I discern new beauties in the object of my affections, and his absolutely unequalled love appears in a far more conspicuous point of light than what I have hitherto viewed it in.

PHIL. According to *our* ideas of the Divine Being, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the most astonishing grace, and unbounded mercy, is displayed, in the salvation of guilty man. We see, from the above representation of things, the great propriety of those declarations of the scripture, which exhibit this stupendous, and unparalleled love unto us. *God so loved the world, that he gave his ONLY BEGOTTEN SON**. And again; *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and SENT his SON to be the propitiation for our sins§*.

So that, the love of God, that is of the DIVINE THREE who bear record in heaven, is, according to our view of the Person of Christ, exhibited in the most striking and wonderful manner. Whereas, according to the opposite scheme, it is totally buried in oblivion; or, however, by no means shines with that brightness and splendour which is so clearly held forth in the scripture declarations.

NEO. Certainly it does not; nay, it is, I think, almost entirely reduced to nothing.

PHIL.

* John iii. 16. § 1 John iv. 10.

PHIL. The apostle was exactly of our mind, when he said to the Corinthian believers, *Ye know the GRACE of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he WAS RICH, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.* Had not our Saviour existed prior to his coming into the world, and being made poor, this passage certainly carries the grossest absurdity on the face of it. For, what grace could there possibly be in *becoming poor*, if the subject spoken of had not been previously *rich*? If he had nothing to *lose*, not even so much as existence, how could he become poorer than what he was? To account for this, will, I think, be a task more than equal, even to the abilities of the *Familiar Illustrator*.

NEO. The force and propriety of the text, upon the supposition of the Godhead of Christ, appear to me obvious; but, were he a man merely, the expression indeed is amazingly absurd.

PHIL. And as the consideration of the wondrous *love* of Christ, has a tendency to increase our love to him, so his *amazing condescension* is urged, as an example of the greatest humility, and a pattern for our constant imitation. To this purpose is the following passage. *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the FORM of GOD, thought it not robbery to be EQUAL with GOD; but made himself of NO REPUTATION, and took upon him the form of a servant* *.

From

* Phil. ii. 5—8.

From this passage, you see, Christ's being in the *form* of God, is directly opposed to his being in the *form* of a servant. He was originally and necessarily in the one, but the other was entirely a *voluntary* thing; he *took* it, that is of his own good pleasure, or according to the riches of his grace. But, if we once set aside his natural dignity, his assuming our nature is no instance at all of voluntary humility; nor could he possibly *take* it of his own choice.

So that, if the Lord Jesus Christ were a *man only*, this declaration would be equally absurd with the other; and, so far from being a pattern of humility, would rather be an instance of the greatest pride, and the highest arrogance.

NEO. My affections are, in some measure warmed, and my mind refreshed with the consideration of the transcendent love of Jesus. It will, I hope, constrain me to live to him. The reflection, likewise, of his amazing humility, will, I trust, be attended with suitable affections. Surely this should reconcile me to every situation in life where divine providence may see meet to fix me.

PHIL. Certainly it ought: For, the consideration that our all-glorious Redeemer was a *man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief**, should banish every murmur and complaint from our minds, notwithstanding the afflictions we may be exercised with.

NEO.

* Is. liii. 3.

NEO. The doctrine of our Saviour's GOD-HEAD, is, I clearly perceive, the very basis of the Christian's comfort, and the most animating motive to universal obedience. Did the Eternal Word, who was possessed of all the peerless glories of Deity, and inconceivably blessed in the enjoyment and fruition of himself—did He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, and before whom all nations are but as the drop of a bucket—did this glorious, majestic, adorable Personage assume our nature, and tabernacle in our world; did he make himself of no reputation, and take upon him the form of a servant, that we guilty rebellious sinners might be enriched with grace and glory—and shall I not devote my self, my soul, my body, my time, talents, and influence in the world, to his service! Yes, my dear Lord, henceforward I will, by thy gracious assistance, live and act to thy glory. *If I forget THEE, let my right hand forget her cunning: If I do not remember THEE, and thy interest, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, yea, if I prefer not THEE above my chief joy*.*

PHIL. How glad am I to hear, that you *feel* the influence of this glorious doctrine; and that you are enabled to manifest suitable and correspondent affections. Conscious of its vast importance, let us ever hold it fast; and, by every proper expression, declare our particular regard for so capital a truth. Let us look continually to HIM, in whom *dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead*

* Psa. cxxxvii. 5, 6.

192 THE SUBJECT, &c. Dial. IX.

Godhead bodily *, for all necessary supplies of grace and strength; that we may *have our fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life* †.

And may the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus §!

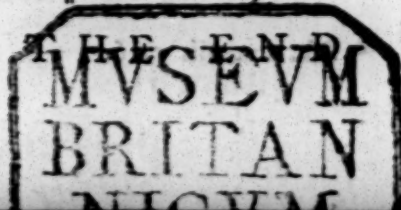
NEO. So be it! And permit me, my dear friend, to make a grateful acknowledgement of the tender regard you have manifested for my spiritual welfare, in endeavouring to give me all necessary information upon so important and interesting a subject.

PHIL. If God be glorified, I am satisfied: And I trust I have not been a loser by what we have repeatedly been engaged in; but have found the promise accomplished, *He that watereth, shall be watered also himself* ‡. Should any other difficulty occur to you, either upon this or any other subject, I shall with pleasure, at any time, give you all the assistance that lies in my power.

And may the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen ||.

* Col. ii. 9. † Rom. vi. 22. § Phil. iv. 7. ‡ Prov. xi. 25.

|| Heb. xiii. 20, 21.



E R R A T A.

Page 59, line 5, for prefs, read pass.

———— do. 8, for Diety, read Deity.

Page 103, do. 5, for nevertherless, read nevertheless.

REPORT

1. The first part of the report is a general statement of the facts of the case.

2. The second part of the report is a statement of the evidence.

3. The third part of the report is a statement of the conclusions.

4. The fourth part of the report is a statement of the recommendations.

5. The fifth part of the report is a statement of the conclusions.

